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Nicaragua
after 10 years

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REPRODUCTIVE FIGHTS



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Giving choice a chance

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Unease reigns in rural China

By Alisa Joyce

CHANGSHA, CHINA

To understand China, go to the countryside. Chairman Mao never said that, but he worked on those principles and led the only revolution that could succeed in China—a peasant revolution. What he did say, to paraphrase, is that the peasants are a blank page upon which the most beautiful words can be written. It is on that blank page that the current leadership in China hopes to rewrite the history of the Tianamen Square democracy movement.

The persecution of intellectuals, students and pro-democracy activists directed by party leaders in Beijing seems a long way away from the rice paddies and villages of southern China. "The heavens are high and the emperor is far away," goes the ancient maxim. The farmers and small shopkeepers of Hunan, Mao's home province, go about their business paying greater attention to seasonal prerogatives than political purges.

Yet, in Changsha, the provincial capital of Hunan, and in the surrounding countryside, there is a quiet awareness of what happened in Beijing, and a sense that things will never be quite the same in China again. The so-called "Gang of Elders" now in control of the party seem to believe that they can write a whole new script on the blank page of China's rural masses. Conversations in the countryside, however, reveal a population both confused by, and alienated from, the government.

The emperor's new close: The emperor is not so far away these days, and neither are his critics. Changsha, like dozens of other political capitals across China, witnessed student demonstrations of its own, ones that turned rebel-

their heads very low.

The government's anti-student slogans are as ubiquitous here as they are in Beijing. The simplistic phrases are easily memorized and repeated by the terrified populace. The radio at the airport blares: "We must struggle against the counterrevolutionary rebellion." The local newspapers, carbon copies of those in Beijing, rail against "rumormongering" by the Voice of America (VOA) and praise the People's Liberation Army for their courageous actions in putting down the rebellion.

The propaganda is effective, yet people are still trying to find their own way to understand and accept what happened.

"The government says VOA is telling lies. VOA says the government is telling lies. It's confusing for us," said an old taxi driver. "We weren't there [on Tianamen Square]. We don't know whom to believe."

Another taxi driver was not confused about whom to believe: "What happened in Beijing was explained to us by China Central Television [CCTV]," he said, "Do I believe it? I should believe it, otherwise the country will not be peaceful. Americans see this from one side, but the Chinese must see it from many sides."

Young middle-school students at Changsha's Number One Teachers' Training Institute, Chairman Mao's alma mater, admitted to taking part in the demonstrations early on, but said the students in Beijing had gone too far in their protests. "The government tried to negotiate, but the students wouldn't listen," said one young man. "The People's Liberation Army couldn't have done what VOA said it did. VOA is exaggerating the truth."

Changsha is a dreary, dirty, undeveloped city with little in the way of shiny new construction to show for Deng Xiaoping's decade-old "open door" policy. An inland province just north of the economic powerhouse of Guangdong, Hunan has in many ways experienced more of the bleaker consequences of economic expansion. It remains important, if only historically so, for its role as a revolutionary spawning grounds. Mao was born there, as was Hu Yaobang, ousted Communist Party chief whose death inspired the recent student demonstrations, and Li Shaoqi and Peng Dehuai, both early revolutionaries who were purged at Mao's behest in the '50s and '60s.

Guangdong province, on the coast and right next door to Hong Kong, has boomed in the last 10 years, benefiting from economic policies that give special freedoms and flexibilities to strategically situated coastal provinces. Meanwhile, Hunan, just to the north, has been left to find its own way and has gotten a late start.

Official corruption: The principle gripe of the Hunanese is not a lack of democracy or freedom but the tremendous problem of what the Chinese call *guandao*, or official profiteering. Lower, mid-level and high-ranking officials in China have little cash resources with which to exercise their power, but they do have control of scarce commodities. An unreformed—and currently unreformable—dual-price structure in the Chinese economy of artificially low state-set prices and volatile free-market prices, often five to ten times higher than state prices, has established an easy foundation for profiteering and graft.

A Hunan university student explained it this way: "I am an official. I control this product (usually raw materials or goods like fertilizer, cotton or steel). I should sell it by this price, but privately I raise up the price. That's official profiteering."

Private dealing of this type is epidemic all across China, and especially in the south where industry and manufacturing is growing rapidly, demanding even more imports, whatever the price. A kind of economic warlordism has arisen whereby officials control their own economic fiefdoms to the detriment of local people and local industry.

So, for the peasants and ordinary people of Hunan, the students' call for change and reform struck a resonant chord. Like many of the students who carried his picture in marches, local people remember Mao Zedong as a different kind of leader, leading a different kind of China. "Under Mao it was better," said the old taxi driver. "Now the rich are getting richer and the poor are really poor." His sentiments were echoed by another old man, a peasant in a small village about 70 kilometers outside of Changsha. Balancing water buckets on a pole across his shoulders, he cackled away in the Hunanese dialect, "During Mao's time people were equal. Now there are rich and

poor. If you have money now, it's better; if not, it's worse. Reforms have brought price instability, that's all. You have more money, but everything is more expensive. In Mao's time if someone was corrupt, they were out. Now, not only is one man corrupt, his brother is corrupt and his father is even corrupt."

A group of younger peasants, asked about the events in Beijing, at first pretended ignorance. "We have no opinions," they laughed. "Peasants have never had opinions in China." But they talked of students who, fleeing from the Beijing crackdown, came through the countryside spreading the word. One student, they said, from a village only five kilometers down the road, came home in a coffin. "The government has never before killed students," said a young farmer, shaking his head, "This will have an impact."

Angry about the price of fertilizer, about reforms which bring more money but insurmountable inflation, about corrupt local officials, still the peasants were resigned to their lot. "Whoever has the power has the strength in China, that's the way it is."

Pensive resistance: Down the road, in a restaurant near Mao's ancestral home, an old woman had talked to Beijing students as they came through and believed what they told her. "The army has guns," she said. "The students only have pens. How can I kill you with a pen? If you have a gun, you can kill. Nobody believes what the government says, nobody. But there is nothing to be done. The power is in their hands." Then leaning forward and clenching her fist, she said, "Tell the world how our students died. This corrupt government must be overthrown."

In a rural university near Changsha, frightened students were interviewed in a dark room, assured beforehand of their complete anonymity in these reports. "I will go abroad," said one activist who had travelled to Beijing to join the Tianamen Square protests. "In America I can live freely... We were very enthusiastic, very excited, very hopeful. We thought we could change China. Now we realize that to change China is not so simple. It is very difficult for us to do revolution in China."

Another student was bitter, blaming the crushing of the movement on Chinese culture, not the government. "The Chinese people believe that if they are not starving, they will not fight. What is democracy? Is it apples, a big plate of food? For 30 yuan [\$8, an inducement offered by factory owners] the workers don't go on strike. Chinese people haven't been enlightened enough to enjoy democracy." He added, "The people did support us but did not completely understand us. They didn't know we were fighting for them."

These students learned what happened in Beijing through phone calls and from the personal testimonies of students who sought refuge on their remote campus as they fled south. One such refugee taped his recollections of Tianamen Square on the night the army attacked, and his tape was played on the university broadcast system. Shortly thereafter, the local police moved in and tore down posters on campus and restored official control over the broadcast system. The students were frightened into silence and then disillusioned into defeatism.

"Now we just obey," said one former activist, "What can we do, fight again?" He was convinced that the student movement was not a failure, however. "In some ways the movement has enlightened the people. [It told them] you are slaves, you are very low, our country is very low, you are not living for yourself. The Chinese people are coming from a feudal society and put their hope in some god or wizard. But now the people know they must fight for their own rights, put faith in themselves. But yesterday they were slaves. They cannot be masters overnight."

Alisa Joyce writes frequently on Asia for *In These Times*.

We've moved to the left

Geographically speaking, that is. *In These Times*' new office is west of and to the left of our former home. We're now at 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Our new phone number: (312) 772-0100.

INSIDE STORY

lions after the news of the killings in Beijing reached the south. Students blocked the railway station, barricaded roads and marched by the tens of thousands down Changsha's broad main avenue past the city and provincial government buildings. A month after the crackdown at least 27 students and workers were arrested and given prison terms for rioting. As in Beijing, people are keeping

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By Jim Naureckas

WASHINGTON

(This is the second part of a three-part series.)

THE EVER-EXPANDING SCANDALS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have exposed the shocking extent to which the Reagan administration manipulated federal housing programs to reward its friends and cronies. For New York's Republican senator, Al D'Amato, this amounted to politics as usual.

D'Amato was one of many prominent Republicans given vast influence at HUD, which he used to win contracts for contributors to his campaign chest. He is also linked to the abuse of HUD projects in his hometown of Hempstead, Long Island, where housing subsidies were treated as political spoils.

The intervention by New York's junior senator into the federal housing system, while consistent with D'Amato's record of clubhouse-style politics, is a case study in how the lax standards of Reagan's HUD allowed insiders to manipulate the system. It also serves as a warning about how difficult it will be for congressional investigations to get to the bottom of the housing scandal: D'Amato sits on one of the key Senate committees looking into the imbroglio.

Under Reagan's HUD secretary, Samuel Pierce, Republican bigwigs had almost unlimited access to top department officials, who would often overrule the regular decisionmaking process to award contracts to their well-connected friends. Some of the worst abuses involved the "moderate rehabilitation" program, which subsidized developers renovating low- and moderate-income housing. The program was "set up and designed to be a political program," Deborah Gore Dean, Pierce's special assistant, told the *Wall Street Journal*. "It's the system of spoils and favoritism." (Dean later took the Fifth Amendment when asked by Congress about the program.)

D'Amato was one who took advantage of this "system of spoils and favoritism." A senator notorious for his deal-making abilities, D'Amato received contributions totaling \$18,000 in February 1987 from a group of Puerto Ricans with an interest in moderate rehabilitation projects. A month later D'Amato met with HUD official Thomas Demery, who oversaw the program, and asked him to subsidize 525 housing units in Puerto Rico as well as 125 units in New York. In April, HUD approved funding for many of these units, largely due to the influence of the man known at the department as "the senator from Puerto Rico."

HUD slinging: One of D'Amato's contributors, Puerto Rican businessman Eduardo Lopez Ballori, worked closely with Joseph Monticciolo, the New York regional administrator for HUD, to determine which Puerto Rican projects would be funded, even though Monticciolo had no authority in that region. Monticciolo was, however, a close friend and major fundraiser for D'Amato, who had lobbied the White House to get him his job at HUD. No longer at HUD, Monticciolo is now a partner in a New York hotel development project with Ballori.

The moderate rehabilitation program was not the only project D'Amato lobbied for at HUD. In fact, nearly a third of the \$38 million given to Pierce for discretionary spending went to New York, at least \$8 million of that to projects specifically endorsed by

HUD was a cookie jar for New York Senator Al D'Amato



Sen. Al D'Amato (R-NY): a HUD of the others when it came to feeding at the public trough.

D'Amato.

The senator amassed the pull he had at HUD—and elsewhere in the Reagan administration—by repeatedly refusing to vote for bills close to Reagan's heart unless he was granted favors from a constantly updated wish list D'Amato kept at hand. While his ability to win pork barrel projects for New York has won him the tacit support of the state's two most powerful Democrats, Gov. Mario Cuomo and New York City Mayor Ed Koch, his lobbying for out-of-state developments at a time when his own state's share of HUD units was declining is one indication that what's good for Al D'Amato is not always good for New York.

Machine made: D'Amato brings to Washington the horse-trading skills of someone brought up in the machine politics of suburban Long Island. Incredibly, he made the jump to the U.S. Senate from the less-than-lofty post of township supervisor—albeit in the largest "town" in the country, Nassau County's Hempstead, a sprawling collection of suburban villages with a total population of 800,000.

The Republican machine in Nassau County has been compared in sophistication to that of the late Richard Daley in Chicago. The architect of the organization was Joseph Margiotta, D'Amato's mentor, who was in the process of being indicted at the same time he was helping his protege win a dirty Republican primary against ailing incumbent Jacob Javits and then ride Reagan's 1980 coattails to the Senate. In 1983, Margiotta was sent to prison for his role in an insurance kickback

How housing subsidies created to help the poor and middle class were used to grease a notorious Long Island political machine.

scheme, a scam that the grand jury declared was dependent on the cooperation of the "presiding supervisor of the town of Hempstead"—i.e., Al D'Amato.

One of Margiotta's contributions to the science of patronage was the "1 percent system," under which all Nassau County employees who wanted to win promotions or get raises had to give 1 percent of their salary to the Republican Party. D'Amato told a grand jury investigating the kickback plan in 1975 that "officially and unofficially no one has ever come to me and complained to me and made known to me that type of policy."

But a letter from D'Amato to a Nassau County Republican official later surfaced, stating that D'Amato had spoken to Margiotta, who had agreed that a raise for a certain sanitation department employee "would be approved if he took care of the 1 percent." D'Amato enclosed a check to cover the contribution.

D'Amato spent his entire career between law school and the Senate working for the Margiotta machine in a milieu that turns every governmental function into an opportunity to reward one's political allies. Some of those allies are unsavory: Philip Basile, a Long Island disco owner who was convicted in 1983 of conspiring with a member of the Lucchese organized crime family in a dodge to win parole for a drug dealer, received a character reference from Sen. D'Amato saying he was an "honest, truthful, hardworking man...of integrity."

As one federal law enforcement agent told *The New Republic*, "I get nauseous when I hear Al D'Amato talking about his so-called anti-drug crusade. How does he think the Lucchese family earns their money?"

Other allies are closer to home. D'Amato won his father Armand a job with the county as a "research director," a job that eventually paid \$34,000 a year, while the elder D'Amato continued to run his insurance agency which took in \$60,000 in commissions from a firm that did business with Al's township.

The prevailing Nassau County attitude that no graft is too big or too small can be

seen in the abuse of a HUD mortgage subsidy program in D'Amato's home village of Island Park in Hempstead Township. Because of his interest, the village received far more than its share of HUD-subsidized housing, especially for a well-off suburb where house prices start at \$150,000. The senator's neighbors won other goodies as well, most notably funding for a \$1 million pool for those residents who preferred not to swim at one of the community's three ocean beaches. (After the pool became a scandal Island Park agreed to return the money.) The village residents, in gratitude to their most famous citizen, renamed a street D'Amato Drive for him.

The program was intended to provide housing for lower-income couples and to help integrate the 97 percent white Island Park by soliciting black participants. Instead, village officials privately informed local insiders when the programs were to be announced. On the morning newspaper ads for the subsidized units appeared, enough applications from those with the right connections were already under the village clerk's office door to fill all the spaces.

Political reality: Those in the know—all of them white—included a cousin of D'Amato and a son of Geraldine McGann, a village board member and HUD administrator who owes her federal post to D'Amato's lobbying. Some participants were able to parlay their special status into major profits. One bought a subsidized home for \$59,500 and sold it six years later for \$270,000; another house that more than doubled in price was located, appropriately, at 11 D'Amato Drive.

A 1984 HUD audit raised questions about the Island Park program, and particularly about the role of McGann, who as a village board member apparently voted on the sale of village land for her son's house. But McGann was never reprimanded. Her superior, as it happens, was Joseph Monticciolo, the D'Amato crony involved with the Puerto Rican developments.

Other Long Island HUD projects under Monticciolo's jurisdiction also became scandal-ridden. Almost all of the contracts for a HUD-funded storefront rehabilitation program in the village of Hempstead, a subunit of the township, were improperly awarded to two contractors. (The two did not have an intensely competitive relationship: the president of one was the vice president of the other.) And 13 people were indicted on July 12 on charges they defrauded a HUD program in Brookhaven, Long Island, by obtaining housing intended for low-income residents through false applications and then renting them illegally.

A direct link between D'Amato and most of the Long Island abuses has not been suggested. But they were overseen by longtime D'Amato supporters, handpicked by the Senator—people he knew would protect his political base.

"I'm just doing what a senator is supposed to do," D'Amato told a Washington news conference in June. "And now I'm being penalized for it." By some standards, helping contributors and rewarding supporters is what a senator is supposed to do. And nobody does it better than Al D'Amato. □

Jim Naureckas is the managing editor of the *Council on Hemispheric Affairs' Washington Report on the Hemisphere*.

IN THESE TIMES JULY 19-AUGUST 1, 1989 3

By Joel Bleifuss

The scandal that wouldn't die

Last month the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 12-7 to approve former Bush aide, CIA veteran and Iran-contra figure Donald Gregg as ambassador to Korea. In his May 12 testimony before the committee Gregg denied that either he or George Bush were involved in arming the contras at a time when such efforts were illegal. Gregg explained to the committee that in two separate memos to then-Vice President Bush, Gregg's secretary had mistakenly typed "resupply of the contras" when Gregg had meant "resupply of the copters." Further, Gregg claimed that Lt. Col. Oliver North must have made a mistake when he wrote in his notebook that Gregg and he had discussed contra resupply at a Sept. 10, 1985, meeting (see *In These Times*, May 24). The committee never questioned Gregg about reports published in *In These Times* that he was a participant in the alleged 1980 arms-for-hostages deal between the Reagan-Bush campaign and representatives of the Ayatollah Khomeini (see *In These Times*, June 24, 1987, October 12 and 19, 1988). Three Democrats on the committee went along with the nine Republican members to provide the needed majority. According to the *Washington Post's* Walter Pincus and Joe Pichirallo, the vote was "another sign that Congress wants to put behind it any lingering controversy and unanswered questions about the Iran-contra affair." One of Gregg's Democratic votes came from Sen. Charles S. Robb (D-VA), who said that Gregg's sworn statements were "as reasonable and believable as I think we could expect under the circumstances." This led columnist Mary McGrory to comment: "What the 'circumstances' were, Robb did not explain. What he probably meant was that only some crazed purist would imagine that a lifelong CIA man, trained in the 'eyes only' and 'need to know' tradition of 'the company,' would spill the beans on what he knew about Iran-contra and what he told his boss when he was then-Vice President Bush's national security adviser. The literal truth, any fool could see, would only have killed the nomination and distressed the president." Another Democrat voting for Gregg was Committee Chairman Claiborne Pell (D-RI). *In These Times* has learned that Pell, initially hostile to the nomination, later changed his mind, possibly after receiving indications that the White House was initiating a negative publicity campaign about his interest in psychic research. Sen. Terry Sanford (D-NC) was the final Democrat to support the Gregg nomination. He said, "If Gregg was lying, he was lying to protect the president, which is different from lying to protect himself.... My own view is to leave [Iran-contra] to history to find out the true facts." After all, Congress isn't up to the job.

Synchronicity?

Remember the 52 hostages who flew out of Tehran moments after Ronald Reagan was inaugurated on Jan. 20, 1980? Now another "coincidence" has visited itself upon the Reagan and Bush presidencies. On May 12, the day that Donald Gregg testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the U.S. attorney in Denver charged Portland arms dealer Richard Brenneke with perjury. Last fall Brenneke had said in a sworn deposition that he attended an Oct. 20, 1980, meeting in Paris that ironed out the final details of an arms-for-hostages deal between representatives of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign. According to Brenneke, the Americans present at that meeting included William Casey, the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign chief who was later named CIA director, and Donald Gregg, who at the time was serving as President Carter's National Security Council (NSC) liaison with the CIA. Brenneke also claimed that he had been employed by the CIA on a contract basis from the late '60s until 1985. (Brenneke gave his deposition in defense of his friend Heinrich Rupp, a Colorado gold dealer and pilot, who claims to have flown Casey to Paris on October 18, 1980. Rupp, like Brenneke, also claims to have been employed by the CIA. Rupp was eventually convicted of bank fraud.) The perjury indictment put to an end any lingering possibility that Brenneke would be called to testify on the Gregg nomination.

Congressional testimony: The October deposition was not the first time Brenneke spoke out on the Iran-contra scandal. In May 1988 Brenneke charged that Gregg, in his role as then-Vice President Bush's national security adviser, helped supervise a contra arms network that was partially funded by the Colombian cocaine cartel (see *In These Times*, June 8, 1988). Brenneke testified about



Rubbed out: Photographer Jeff Tinsley's "Making a Rubbing" is part of the Smithsonian exhibit "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: A National Experience," currently on display in Chicago at the Peace Museum, 430 W. Erie St.

Fascism in Bedford, New York

Tradition, Family and Property (TFP), a neo-fascist organization infamous in South America, has, in recent years, made friends in Washington, D.C.'s New Right community.

In South America TFP is considered so on the fringe that even Latin American rightists have little to do with the organization. In Chile, a TFP stronghold, group members formed the core of *Patria y Libertad*, a group known for violently attacking anti-Pinochet protesters and bombing television stations. In December 1984 a TFP member was arrested in Venezuela for plotting to assassinate the pope.

TFP's roots go back to 1932 in Brazil, when Plinio Correa De Oliveira, a young right-wing Catholic activist, established the Society for Political Status, a group of neo-Nazis who took their ideas, their inspiration and even their dress from Italian fascism. Correa De Oliveira founded TFP in 1960, and it grew with the support of Brazilian landowners who have ruthlessly used private armies to maintain power. In Brazil, the TFP message is that migrant workers and peasants are content in their poverty and that the Communists are behind all labor unrest.

Members of TFP, who are all men, women being unsuitable for street fighting, believe the world would be a better place if Catholic monarchs ruled as they had during the Middle Ages. As they see it, communism started with Martin Luther nailing

his protest to the door at Wittenburg. They well remember the French Revolution and the two TFP heroes, Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI, who lost their heads. More recently they are upset about the Second Vatican Council, which gave the laity a voice in church affairs.

TFP leaders have managed, by cleverly hiding their roots and affiliation with Latin American dictatorships and by presenting a scholarly facade, to become a respected and oft-seen fixture in conservative circles.

TFP enjoys support in the office of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), where aide Earl Appleby has been a TFP supporter for several years. "My impression of them," he told *In These Times*, "is that they're a traditional anti-communist, pro-life group." House Republican leader Newt Gingrich (R-GA) has appeared at dinners with them. Heritage Foundation head Paul Weyrich, former Reagan aide Morton Blackwell and Conservative Caucus founder Howard Phillips have all been guests at TFP's luxurious 296-acre estate in Bedford, N.Y. Phillips told *In These Times* that TFP has lobbied with his group for aid to the contras and a TFP delegation traveled with him to a Chevron shareholders meeting in Atlanta to urge that corporation to pull out of "Marxist" Angola.

According to Fran Griffith, who runs a Washington public relations firm that caters to conservative groups, TFP is established in New Right circles. They appear frequently at luncheons and gatherings with senators and congressmen. She says, "They're on the basic conservative

invite lists."

"I'm astounded that any conservative group would be loony enough to link up with them," says Warren Dean, a New York University history professor who specializes in Brazil. "We're talking about people who would support the Inquisition."

Angela Grimm of the Free Congress Research Foundation, an offshoot of the Heritage Foundation, admits, "They kind of do believe in feudalism."

The group's Bedford estate, once a dairy farm, includes a large wooden house, a long bunkhouse, a combination guesthouse-library, various Christian monuments and a 65-room mansion decorated with medieval weapons such as poleaxes and javelins. (TFP was forced to leave its New Rochelle, N.Y., mansion after residents complained that TFP members patrolled the grounds with crossbows.)

TFP income in 1987, according to New York State tax returns, totaled close to \$5 million. The money helps pay for sophisticated computer systems, a summer camp and something called the "America Needs Fatima" campaign. The campaign publicizes a 1917 appearance in Portugal of the Virgin Mary who, members claim, warned the world about the dangers of Soviet Communism.

On a recent tour of the TFP estate, *In These Times* was shown a Pentagon-like electronic wall map inside the bunkhouse. Hundreds of green, blue and yellow map lights pinpointed TFP outposts around the world. The organization has big plans.

—Billy Tashman

Arizona chainsaw massacre

Four environmentalists, including two well-known members of the radical group Earth First!, will face trial August 1 for conspiring to sabotage three nuclear power plants in three Western states. The May 31 arrests resulted from a three-year FBI undercover operation that included infiltration of Earth First! in Arizona. Earth First!'s direct actions, inspired by the motto "No compromise in the defense of Mother Earth," have earned the group a reputation as the militant wing of the U.S. environmental movement.

Two of those arrested who are apparently not active in Earth First!, Marc Davis and Mark Baker of Prescott, Ariz., were apprehended while they were allegedly cutting down a federal power line supplying electricity to pump water to Arizona communities. Peg Millett, a third suspect and an Earth First! member, allegedly escaped from the arrest site despite the efforts of 50 FBI agents on foot, on horseback and in helicopters. She was arrested the next day at her job at Planned Parenthood in Phoenix. Dave Foreman, co-founder of Earth First! and author of *EcolDefense, a Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*, was roused out of bed by armed FBI agents at his home in Tucson and accused of masterminding and financing the alleged actions.

Earth First! claims to have no lead-

ers and no membership lists, but rather describes itself as a decentralized "movement," involved in direct action to defend the wilderness. The group is probably best known for its actions to protect virgin redwoods and other old-growth forests in California and Oregon.

At a press conference, FBI agents from the anti-terrorism squad claimed that Davis, Baker and Millett were on a practice run to perfect techniques to be used against nuclear power plants. U.S. Attorney Roger Dokken recommended all four be incarcerated until trial. Foreman was eventually released on \$50,000 unsecured bond, and the others remain in custody nearly seven weeks after their arrests. Dokken claimed that the alleged Earth First! conspiracy—to simultaneously cut power lines leading into Palo Verde in Arizona, Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in California and the weapons factory at Rocky Flats in Colorado—could lead to a "China Syndrome" meltdown at Diablo Canyon. But a spokesman for Pacific Gas and Electric Co., which operates Diablo Canyon, has said there is no threat of nuclear discharge from the cutting of power lines.

Foreman's lawyers, including Gerry Spence, best known for his successful suit on behalf of the family of Karen Silkwood against the Kerr McGee Company—claim that their client was framed by FBI agents provocateurs. As attorney James Alexander told the *San Francisco*

Chronicle, "They [federal authorities] not only had a scheme to infiltrate this group; this scheme also included somehow implicating Mr. Foreman because of his notoriety."

Mike Roselle, another co-founder of Earth First! who was not implicated in the alleged plot, told *In These Times*, "We have known that federal agents have been attending our open meetings for some time, but this is an obvious escalation of harassment by the FBI. The FBI infiltrator who went by the name of Mike Tait and set up this frame-up committed several illegal acts at Earth First! actions and commonly encouraged other Earth First!ers to join in. This is a classic frame-up."

Roselle, who last year served a four-month jail sentence for hanging a banner on Mt. Rushmore to publicize the issue of acid rain, noted that the decentralized nature of Earth First! will prevent the destruction of the movement by FBI dirty tricks. "Our planning goes on at the lowest level of seasoned grass-roots activists. They may be able to frame a few of us, but they won't be successful in destroying us like they were with the Black Panthers or the American Indian Movement."

FBI agent Bob Pence told the *Boulder (Colorado) Daily Camera* that the FBI investigation began in Washington, D.C. Earth First! supporters say that that fact bolsters their claim that the defendants were targeted because of their ideas.

—Todd Steiner

New York chainsaw massacre

NEW YORK—Tenant activists here thought they'd guessed the worst in June when Bruce Bailey failed to show up for a meeting at a Harlem building a short distance from his home on Manhattan's Upper West Side. But as details emerged of the execution-style abduction and slaying of this veteran tenants-rights advocate, many could only conclude that the acrimonious war between tenants and abusive landlords has entered a new, uglier phase.

Bailey's chainsawed body—the remnants turned up in four garbage bags at a bleak industrial site in the South Bronx, with what appeared to be cord marks on the torso portion. Missing are his head, hands and feet. Bailey's widow positively identified the corpse from birthmarks and other features. The police, citing Bailey's array of enemies, acknowledged they had no suspects.

Bailey's disappearance and murder prompted a flurry of stories from the city's four major dailies. This was followed by a second wave of articles describing what the *Daily News* termed Bailey's "dark side." The later resurrected decade-old controversies ranging from an unsuccessful unemployment-benefits fund-raising scam for Bailey's organization, the Columbia Tenants Union (CTU), to identifying a slum landlord as an Israeli in the union's newspaper.



Slain tenant activist Bruce Bailey.

The memorial service for Bailey drew hundreds of community activists and grateful tenants to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Speakers ranging from civil rights attorney William Kunstler to tearful tenant leaders at newly organized buildings who praised Bailey as a hero who awakened in ordinary citizens the courage to fight for safe, humane housing conditions.

Which was the real Bruce Bailey? Even Bailey's detractors don't deny his confrontational tactics were effective at overcoming the city's institutional inertia in protecting its tenants.

The CTU was initially set up to oppose the excesses of a powerful West Side landlord, Columbia University. The group probably attained its broadest appeal in the late '70s and early '80s when a wave of gen-

trification hit the Upper West Side. At the time, even tenants who viewed themselves as safely middle class could be evicted under the permissive real estate laws governing the conversion of apartment buildings to cooperative ownership. For lower-income tenants, physical coercion and the withholding of services were more often the order of the day—particularly at single-room-occupancy hotels where several deaths were linked to conversion efforts.

Subsequent legislation granted tenants a great deal of protection. Until then, it often took a tough outsider like Bailey to inform tenants of their rights and of the considerable bargaining leverage they possessed as a group.

In cases where landlords failed to provide basic services or make needed repairs, a rent strike would bring the matter to an immediate crisis and grant tenants their day in court. The night of his abduction, Bailey was on his way to kick off one such rent strike at a building on West 125th Street.

At the memorial service, speakers urged mourners to take Bailey's murder as a spur to their own increased activism on behalf of tenants rights. But despite the inspiring rhetoric, it was hard to see who could effectively step into Bailey's shoes. Or, given the gruesome circumstances of his death, who would even want to take on so visible a role.

—Gerry Khermouch

this contra-cocaine connection in a closed-door hearing of Sen. John Kerry's (D-MA) subcommittee on narcotics, terrorism and international operations (see *In These Times*, April 26). Subsequent to making these allegations, Brenneke became the object of what appeared to be a White House-led effort to discredit him (see *In These Times*, Oct. 12, 1988). Although the Kerry committee has never released Brenneke's testimony, it did provide transcripts to the U.S. Attorney's office in Denver. Brenneke's Denver attorney, Mike Scott, told *In These Times* that he is asking the court to order the government to turn over a copy of these transcripts to the defense. Brenneke's trial is set to begin July 31 in Denver. Scott said that while no subpoenas have been issued, he does plan to provide witnesses who will back up Brenneke's story.

Anti-arts antics

Protesting art exhibits has become a civic pastime for Chicago philistines. In May 1988 School of the Art Institute student David Nelson's "Mirth and Girth," a parody of late Mayor Harold Washington in women's lingerie, aroused some city council members to personally confiscate the painting. This spring School of the Art Institute student "Dread" Scott Tyler's "What is the Proper Way to Display the U.S. Flag?" led to huge demonstrations in front of the museum. It also incited the Illinois legislature to cut state funding for the School of the Art Institute and the Illinois Arts Alliance, a Chicago-based arts organization that publicly stated that the school had a First Amendment right to exhibit the work. Now Eric Fischl's 1979 painting "Boys at Bat," part of a traveling baseball exhibit, "Diamonds are Forever," has got Chicagoan Ziff Sistrunk in a funk. Sistrunk, executive director of the southside Chicago Sports Council, believes the painting's depiction of a fully clothed boy looking tensely at a naked man swinging at a baseball has one objective: "child molestation." As he explained to Alan Artner of the *Chicago Tribune*: "I have trained players in Little League and semi-pro baseball, and at no time did I train them naked." He is demanding that the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center, which is hosting the show, remove the painting. To that end, Sistrunk is organizing a demonstration of 200 children and their parents in front of the Cultural Center. So far the library has only posted this warning: "There are artworks in this exhibition that some people may find objectionable. Please use discretion when choosing to enter."

Artists to arms

In Chicago, the arts community is beginning to develop the political wherewithal to counter an art-devouring hydra that at the moment is composed of, but not limited to: a vociferous citizenry; a posturing state legislature; columnist Mike Royko, who during the flag riots urged readers to follow his example and stop contributing to the Art Institute; and columnist Patrick Buchanan, who, setting his sights on the National Endowment for the Arts, wrote: "While the right has been busy winning primaries and elections, cutting taxes, funding anti-communist guerrillas abroad, the left has been quietly seizing all the commanding heights of American art and culture."

McCarthyesque: Peter Taub is the director of the Randolph Street Gallery, a non-profit, multidisciplinary arts organization. "McCarthyesque" is the word he uses to describe the current proliferation of art police. He notes that the three artists whose work has caused the greatest outrage—flag-treader "Dread" Scott Tyler; erotic photographer Robert Mapplethorpe; and Andres Serrano, creator of "Piss Christ" (a photo of a crucifix in a pool of the artist's urine)—are, respectively, black, gay and Hispanic. Taub says, "I don't think that is a coincidence." In addition to lobbying, Taub says that the arts community needs to change how it thinks and acts. "People in the arts need to be aware of the dangers of this current political situation. People on all levels of the art world—fashion designers, museum directors, dancers, graphic artists—need to take responsibility for the vitality of the culture."

No surrender: Barbara Scharres is director of the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute, which will be severely affected by the legislature's funding cuts. "I don't think the answer is to retreat," says Scharres, "because when you start censoring yourself in the hope of not offending anyone, you don't know where to draw the line—not unless your programming is reduced to some totally innocuous stuff that nobody would want to see anyway." Scharres is currently promoting an Andy Warhol film series that includes the half-hour epic, *Blow Job*.



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The long march: pro-choice advocates face a difficult road ahead in their efforts to ensure reproductive rights.

By Maggie Garb

IF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT HAS BEEN DOZING, IT is now fully awake and standing at attention. The Supreme Court, following its Reagan administration mandate, has begun to cut into American women's long-held right to legal abortions. The court's decision in a Missouri case earlier this month, along with its decision to hear three more abortion-related cases next term, has sounded an alarm within the women's movement, mobilizing

ABORTION

pro-choice troops.

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* removes some barriers to state-level restrictions on abortions, moving the abortion battleground from the courts to the state and federal legislatures. While the court let stand the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision that legalized abortion, it upheld a Missouri law that restricts when and where a woman can terminate a pregnancy. The ruling has sent women's groups scrambling to formulate a cohesive political strategy to fight laws that limit abortion rights, to elect pro-choice state and federal legislators, and to make it clear to the high court that future setbacks to *Roe* are unacceptable (see accompanying story).

A big job: Facing pro-choice leaders this summer is the question of whether they have the political savvy and organizational foundation to win this war. While for most the answer is an emphatic yes, many agree that the Equal Rights Amendment defeat, coupled with uphill battles in almost every other women's political issue, are chilling reminders that the women's movement confronts a near-Herculean task.

Although pro-choice leaders expected the court's anti-abortion ruling, they have not yet mapped out a concrete and coordinated political strategy to fight the passage of laws similar to Missouri's in other states. Pro-choice leaders speak in general terms about lobbying

Pro-choice advocates girding for the big one

state legislatures, planning rallies and generating pro-choice votes. But critics charge that, so far, the groups lack the type of sophisticated political vision that propelled small anti-choice groups into political power.

Pro-choice leaders are hoping that media coverage of the *Webster* decision will mobilize what they see as a complacent pro-choice majority. "I don't think we are as rich or as

well organized as the right wing, and we never have been," says Leslie Wolfe, executive director of the Center for Women's Policy Studies. "For too long we assumed that the courts would protect us, and now we have to dig up some old strategies and put together some new ones to win this in the political arena."

"What we do have already is a majority of women who believe they should have a right

to control over their bodies. What we have to find is the way to appeal to these women and to mobilize them."

That strategic planning is beginning. The annual conference of the National Organization for Women (NOW) this week in Cincinnati

For too long the pro-choice forces assumed the courts would protect abortion rights. Now they have to use both old and new strategies to win their fight. They face a challenge of huge proportions.

will focus on responding to the decision. Planned Parenthood last week gathered its affiliate presidents from around the country to a three-day training and strategy session in New York. In addition, a coalition of pro-choice organizations, which was formed in January when the court agreed to hear the Missouri case, has announced that it will fund a multi-million dollar war chest for pro-choice lobbying efforts over the next few years. Coalition members include NOW, the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the American Civil Liberties Union, medical groups, labor leaders and political organizations.

Nikki Heidepriem, a political consultant who works with pro-choice groups and Democratic candidates, compares this coalition to the one that defeated Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork. "Not only do we have pro-choice groups, but the whole spectrum of groups in the progressive community will be involved. We will be working at every level in every kind of way," she says.

Fetal federalism: But decisive battles will be fought on enemy turf—the state legisla-

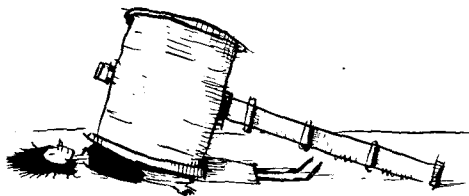
Continued on page 11

Supreme Court's dismantling of *Roe* may have only just begun

As Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun wrote in his dissent on the *Webster* case, "a chill wind blows." Most abortion rights advocates agree that the *Webster* decision was the first step in the court's push to curtail abortion rights.

In the *Webster* ruling, the court upheld the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision, which legalized abortion, but the justices ruled that the state of Missouri could ban the use of any public hospital or other facility from performing abortions not necessary to save the woman's life. Public employees in Missouri are barred from performing abortions and from "encouraging or counseling" women to have abortions unless the pregnancy threatens the woman's life. In addition, for pregnancies of 20 weeks or more, the ruling requires Missouri doctors to determine, when possible, whether the fetus could survive outside the womb.

The five-to-four decision did not deal directly with the legality of abortion, but the justices let stand a non-binding preamble to the Missouri law, which says that life starts at conception. The majority



opinion, written by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and supported by Justices Anthony M. Kennedy, Antonin Scalia, Byron R. White and Sandra Day O'Connor, reflected the court's readiness to overturn *Roe*. Of the five majority justices, only O'Connor, who wrote a separate, but concurring, opinion, voiced concerns about fully reversing the 1973 decision.

The court also announced that it would hear three other cases that involve abortion rights restrictions next term.

Ohio vs. Akron Center for Reproductive Health involves the right of teen-age girls to obtain abortions without parental notification. The Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Cleveland declared unconstitutional a 1985 Ohio law that required doctors to notify at least one parent.

Hodgson vs. Minnesota, Minnesota vs.

Hodgson is a twin appeal of a Minnesota law requiring both parents be notified before a teenage girl can receive an abortion. The Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in St. Paul upheld the law.

Turnock vs. Ragsdale concerns an Illinois law that requires clinics performing abortions in the first trimester to meet technical standards similar to those of operating rooms in full-care hospitals. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in Chicago barred enforcement of the law. This case is considered to be the most offensive to abortion-rights advocates because, if upheld, the law would effectively close all abortion clinics in the state.

The *Ragsdale* case, which involves state power to regulate private abortion clinics, presents the justices with a clear choice between state and federal regulation of abortion rights. Although *Ragsdale* involves many legal technicalities, making its final fate difficult to predict, many observers on both sides of the issue say that this case could deal the deathblow to *Roe*.

—M.G.

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

THE STRUGGLES SPURRED BY THE SUPREME Court's 1954 school desegregation decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, dominated American politics for the next two decades. Now the court's July 3 decision to weaken its historic 1973 ruling that affirmed abortion rights, *Roe vs. Wade*, threatens to make abortion an over-riding political issue of the '90s.

Since 1978, New Right candidates have been using abortion to attract Catholic and fundamentalist Democrats. But the court's ruling in *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* has mobilized proponents as well as opponents of abortion rights (see story on page 6). In upcoming governors' races in 1989 and 1990, the pro-choice movement is beginning to play the same ruthless game of single-issue politics that abortion opponents had previously played.

The question is whether liberals or conservatives, Democrats or Republicans, will benefit by this increased attention to abortion. There's little doubt that from *Roe vs. Wade* to *Webster* the Republicans have come out ahead on the abortion issue. But Democrats and liberals could emerge victorious in the forthcoming civil war over reproductive rights.

Restricted abortion rights: Opinion polls on abortion reveal contradictory sentiments among Americans. In a recent survey, conducted this spring by the *Los Angeles Times*, 61 percent of the respondents thought abortion was "morally wrong," 57 percent believed it was "murder" and 57 percent (vs. 34 percent) opposed women being able to get an abortion "no matter what the reason." But 62 percent opposed a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion. And according to a *Time-CNN* poll, 57 percent of Americans don't think the Supreme Court should overturn the *Roe vs. Wade* decision.

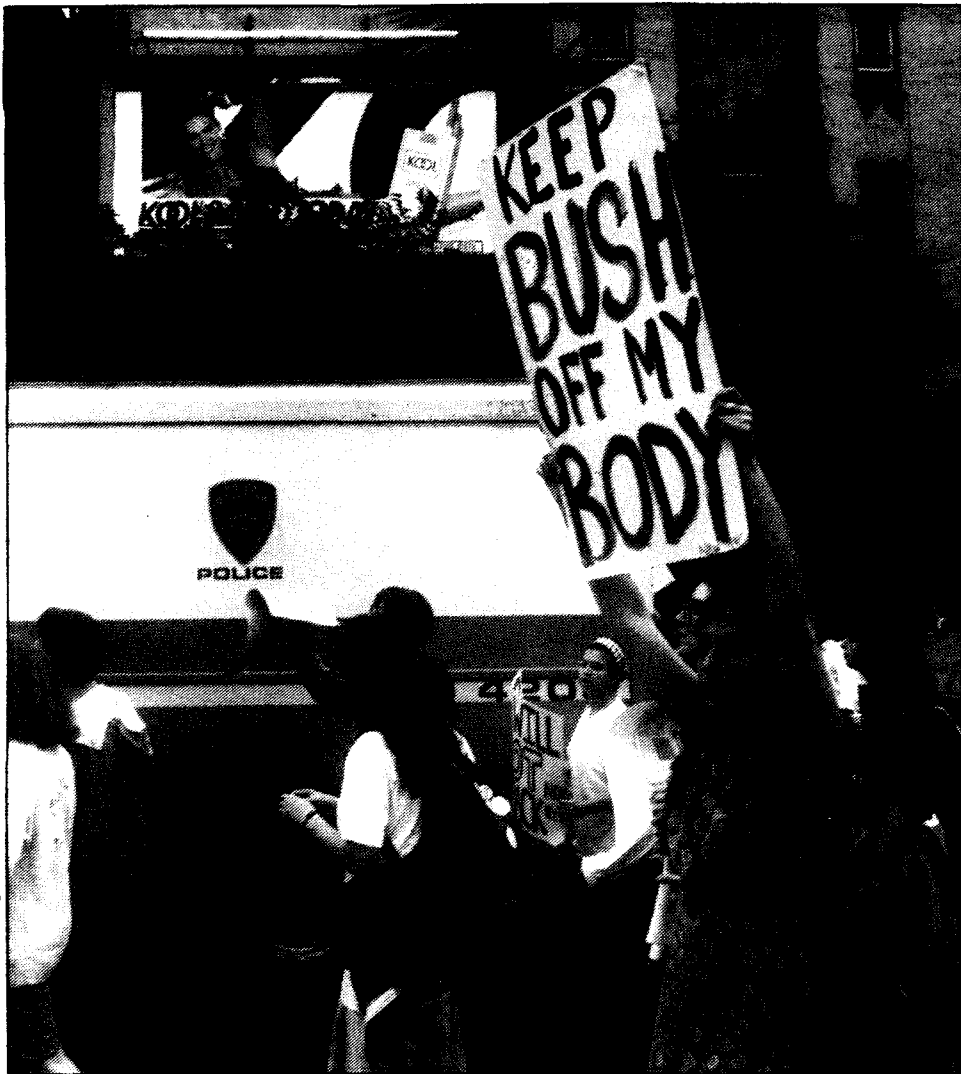
What these kind of surveys reveal is a plurality, if not a majority, in favor of restricted abortion rights. While almost all Americans back abortion in the case of rape, incest or threat to a mother's life, 81 percent in the *Los Angeles Times* survey want parental consent before minors can have abortions. As other surveys have shown, a majority also opposes public funding of abortions.

These figures suggest that voters' attitudes toward abortion depend greatly upon how politicians and partisans frame the issue. If voters feel the issue is whether to ban all abortions, then they are likely to line up with pro-choice politicians; if they feel that the issue is whether to allow unrestricted abortions, then they are more likely to take the pro-life side.

But most important in judging the political effect of abortion is what opinion analysts call "salience"—the degree to which abortion is the determining factor in a voter's decision on a particular candidate.

Rich Republicans, poor Democrats: Since *Roe vs. Wade*, abortion opponents have been much more likely to evaluate candidates on the basis of their abortion votes. In the pre-*Webster* *Los Angeles Times* survey, 47 percent of those who opposed *Roe vs. Wade* said they would switch their vote on the basis of a politician's stand on abortion, while only 25 percent who supported *Roe vs. Wade* said they would. But with the new Supreme Court decision, a higher percentage of pro-choice voters are expected to base their votes on a given politician's abortion stand.

Whether this matters, however, depends



Pro-choice marchers in New York City: are they setting the political agenda of the '90s?

The abortion battle and political choices

on what parties and candidates abortion partisans would otherwise vote for. Two constituencies that have traditionally voted Democratic—white Southern Protestants and urban Catholics—have both abandoned Democratic candidates who favor abortion

DEMOGRAPHICS

rights. In Iowa's 1978 U.S. Senate contest, for instance, Dubuque's anti-abortion Catholics provided the margin of victory for Republican Roger Jepsen's defeat of incumbent Democrat Dick Clark.

The threat of Democratic defections is borne out by findings that the less education and income a voter has, the more likely he or she is to oppose abortion. These lower-income, less-educated voters have also been more likely to vote Democratic. Lower- and middle-income blacks tend to be anti-abortion but don't base their party allegiance on this issue. Lower- and middle-income whites are far more likely to jump to the GOP because of the issue.

But, of course, the issue cuts both ways. If pro-choice voters began basing their votes on abortion alone, then large numbers of middle- and upper-income Republicans and independents would cross over to pro-choice Democratic candidates. This might also prove true for a large group of younger voters, who have tended to identify with Republicans but who favor abortion rights. The Republicans could lose as many voters as they have previously gained.

Democrats would, however, pay a certain price for this exchange. Republicans have prospered as a party of wealthy suburbanites and disenchanted blue-collar Democrats.

The infusion of Democrats has allowed country club Republicans to don the mantle of populism and deprive the Democrats of their tag as the party of the people. A Democratic Party that was comprised of minorities and upper-middle-class Republican émigrés disenchanted with the GOP's abortion stand could win some elections. But it would also forfeit its identification with the middle class—an identification upon which any long-term revival of the party must be based.

Pro-choice backlash: The perils of abortion politics become even more apparent when one looks at individual states. Some of the states that appear solidly anti-abortion like Utah, Nebraska and Oklahoma are likely to elect Republicans anyway, while some pro-choice states like Massachusetts, New

With pro-choice forces joining the single-issue game, party alignments may undergo significant changes in the years to come.

York and the District of Columbia are likely to remain in the Democratic column regardless. But in several key states, abortion may decide elections.

There is a dramatic difference between those states that could respond to a Democratic economic appeal and those states that might respond to a pro-choice platform. For instance, Alabama, South Carolina, Louisiana, Missouri and Pennsylvania are

fertile ground for an economic nationalist politics (see *In These Times*, July 5), but they are also the states where opposition to abortion has the strongest appeal. This means that if abortion becomes the dominant issue in 1990 and 1992, it could short-circuit a Democratic realignment along economic lines.

Republicans face, however, a similar dilemma. Republican opposition to abortion could cost the party votes in solidly pro-choice Colorado, California, Oregon and Washington and could destroy the party in the Northeast, where many of the Republican leaders are pro-choice moderates. The question in these states is whether the Republican Party's anti-abortion platform will dampen the GOP's natural appeal to well-to-do voters.

The first test of abortion politics will be the gubernatorial elections scheduled this November. In New Jersey, there are already clear signs that the court's decision in *Webster* has produced a pro-choice backlash. The Republican candidate, Rep. Jim Courter, had consistently voted against abortion in the House and won the endorsement of New Jersey Right to Life, but in the wake of the court decision, Courter toned down his right-to-life rhetoric. "My thinking is there's not the consensus here to modify the laws we now have in order to restrict abortions," Courter told the *Bergen Record*.

Courter may have been responding to the National Abortion Rights Action League's announcement that it would be spending \$1 million in New Jersey to defeat him, but he was probably also worried about New Jersey polls that show 57 percent of voters favoring unrestricted abortion rights.

In Virginia's gubernatorial race, Republican candidate Marshall Coleman cheered the court's decision and promised to restore the "inalienable rights" of Virginia's "preborn children," while his Democratic opponent, Lt. Gov. Doug Wilder, took a more equivocal position, supporting women's right to abortions while opposing public funding and supporting mandatory parental consent for minors. The black Democrat's stance could prove a boon to his candidacy among the white, middle-class suburbanites who live in the corridor stretching from Washington, D.C., to Norfolk. In the '80s, this group has decided Virginia's elections.

The court's ruling is also casting a shadow over 1990 governor's races. Illinois Attorney General Neil Hartigan, who is expected to seek the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, is backing away from a strong anti-abortion stand. In Massachusetts, Boston's populist Mayor Raymond Flynn must consider whether his opposition to abortion will prevent his winning the Democratic gubernatorial nomination. The president of Boston's chapter of the National Organization for Women has already threatened to make abortion a "litmus test issue" in the Democratic primary.

The cases of Courter and Flynn bear out the two sides of the Democratic abortion dilemma. Courter's sudden waffling on the issue shows the extent to which the court's ruling threatens Republicans in states like New Jersey. But the difficulties faced by Flynn, a promising politician with appeal to both urban ethnics and blacks, show how making abortion the determining issue for voters can undermine the Democrats' attempt to recast themselves as the party of the working and middle classes. The Democrats have something to gain from the new abortion politics, but also much to lose.

IN THESE TIMES JULY 19-AUGUST 1, 1989 7

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

ALTHOUGH ALARMED BY THE EPIDEMIC OF Gorbymania in West Germany occasioned by the Soviet leader's infectious visit to Bonn, France daringly let Mikhail Gorbachov into the country on an official trip in early July.

However, every precaution was taken to protect the French population from contagion. Editorials hammered away at the ravages of Gorbymania in the Federal Republic of Germany, Sovietologues argued over whether Gorbachov was a fake or a failure, and TV came up with ancient Cold War spy movies to set the mood. Public opinion survey questions were skillfully worded to produce expressions of "skepticism" ("Is Gorbachov a prisoner of the Communist system?"). On the eve of the visit, specialists announced proudly that the French seemed largely immune to Gorbymania, perhaps because their unique Gallic rational faculties reject "new thinking."

Draconian measures were taken to prevent handshaking, believed to be a method of transmission. Mikhail Gorbachov and his wife Raisa insisted on going to the Place de la Bastille in hopes of meeting Parisians. Although the media had carefully avoided publicizing the foray, a friendly crowd had gathered. Iron barriers held them back on the sidewalks, but this was not enough to stop the spunky Russian from dashing over to shake their hands. That job was accomplished by a loose pack of savage news photographers who cornered the Gorbachov couple, preventing the flesh-pressing and destroying their own photo opportunity. Free Western competition saved France from embarrassing images of Gorbymania.

On the official level, Gorbachov's visit to France went smoothly enough. In a rare gesture of openness, President François Mitterrand invited the Gorbachov couple to dinner in his own cozy private home in the Rue de Bièvre in the Paris Latin Quarter, rather than the Elysée Palace. Gorbophilic filtered from the top was acceptable for France, *Le Monde* decreed, in contrast to mass Gorbymania in Germany.

Obsessed with "anchoring Germany to the West" and reassuring the Reagan administration as to the political insignificance of Communists in the French government, the first Mitterrand presidency brought French presence in Eastern Europe to a new low. In his second term, Mitterrand aspires to win back lost ground and not leave the field to the West Germans.

"We understand," Gorbachov told the French, "that in many fields we have fallen behind the ideas of our own socialist revolution, and the ideas of liberty, equality and justice that constitute the humanist source of social revolution have been distorted."

The French greet Gorbachov with a frappe on the back

In raising an artificial fuss about Gorbymania, the media set up their own barriers between the man in the street and the Soviet leader, as well as between the French and their German neighbors. The term both exaggerates and trivializes the German response to Gorbachov, which reflects relief at the end of a long period marked by the German invasion of the Soviet Union that left both countries in ruins. The strain of self-criticism in Gorbachov's *glasnost* strikes a particularly responsive chord with Germans who have had to look self-critically at their own past.

Sorbonne of contention: French public discourse, in contrast, tends toward self-congratulation. The bicentennial of the Revolution is marked by constant French crowing at having invented "human rights." Nevertheless, Gorbachov dared invite French opinionmakers to undertake some self-critical reflection about the West's anti-communism.

The Soviet president had asked for a meeting with Paris university students at the Sorbonne. But once again he was kept at a distance from the common people. The guest list for the Sorbonne talk included film stars and successful writers, among the world's best-dressed intellectuals. New philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy and *Libération* editor in chief Serge July were there to complain afterwards of being bored.

Mikhail in the lionizing den gave a speech that was clear and sober, qualities not exactly fashionable in the Parisian word factories. Some in the glittering audience, notably Régis Debray and Claude Lanzmann (author of the documentary film "Shoah") admitted to being impressed. Others complained that Gorbachov had given a speech instead of listening to questions, or voiced disappointment that he had failed to come up with some sensational announcement, such as welcoming Alexander Solzhenitsyn back to Russia.

Since revolution is a favorite theme of French intellectuals, and since France is in the midst of a lavish bicentennial celebration of its 1789 Revolution, it was a natural subject for Gorbachov at the Sorbonne. "Great social and political changes are always preceded by philosophical revolutions," he observed. This was true of the French Revolution, whose "intellectual and political heritage" in turn influenced the philosophers of the workers movement who inspired the Russian Revolution.

Gorbachov drew a comparison between the two. The first, or bourgeois revolution, he said, gave a powerful impulse to "a social system which made civilization and progress advance by giant steps through crises, pitiless competition, exploitation and expansion, through unrestrained development of productive forces stopping at nothing, through national and colonial wars and the subjugation of entire peoples." But this same system also "created new intellectual and scientific values elaborating in the course of class struggle universal democratic values."

The second, or socialist revolution was in part "a protest, a response to the contradictions and faults which appeared in the course of the development of the first." It also ran up against "violent resistance, just like the first at its birth."

But afterwards, "the natural development

of the new system of socialism turned out to be much more difficult. And not only for subjective reasons, following crude mistakes and violations of its own principles. The world relationship of forces was much less favorable" for the socialist revolution than for the bourgeois revolution over a century earlier, Gorbachov said. "It ran up against a system much more powerful, and that proved not at all to have exhausted its historic capacities."

Gorbachov added that "the desire to destroy the new system was one of the causes of fascism and the war it set off. It is also at the base of the Cold War that has risked pushing the whole world toward...a universal catastrophe." "We understand," the Soviet president said, "that in many fields we have, so to speak, fallen behind the ideas of our own socialist revolution," and that "the ideas of liberty, equality and justice that constitute the humanist source of social revolution have been distorted." *Perestroika* aims at achieving the "organic combination of socialism and democracy," a task proving "more difficult and contradictory" than expected. After acknowledging the shortcomings of his own system, Gorbachov tactfully suggested some parallel reflection in the other system.

Has the West, he asked, "ever actually realized where its fierce opposition to socialism has finally led the world? Does its policy in this matter correspond to the ideals of the French revolution? Isn't that an excellent subject of reflection for intellectuals on every continent?"

Redefining progress: In what was generally interpreted as a veiled reference to the Bush administration, Gorbachov complained of Western political leaders who see European unity only in terms of getting rid of socialism. This is just what has already led to wars, he recalled. "How many illusions still exist that only bourgeois society represents the absolute and eternal truth?" he asked.

Although class struggle still exists, the Soviet leader said priority must go to the general interests of humanity. "The development of material production cannot go on in its old forms with the same burden on the environment." He offered five suggestions toward a new concept of progress.

- Humanity cannot count on spontaneous development. "If we want to survive," the process must be jointly controlled.

- The 21st century needs a new notion of progress, taking into account "reasonable needs" of humanity, resources, ecology and demography, and the need to reduce the gap between the little group of rich industrialized countries and all the others, especially in the Third World.

- The new civilization "will not be a uniform monolith. On the contrary, its viability lies in its diversity and its intellectual, national, social, political and cultural plurality." This being the case, "tolerance toward another way of thinking and another way of life will be among the most important conditions of progress."

- Different systems must cooperate. "Not one of them can claim to bury the others if it doesn't want to commit suicide and bury all of humanity at the same time. This is the idea I would like to stress."

- Struggles for independence and social and political rights must not "overlook the hard realities of the nuclear century" or renounce in advance "the search for peaceful, political means to suppress contradictions and settle eventual conflicts."

The next day, a bunch of French intellectuals on a Paris-Moscow TV hookup set themselves up as judges of truth and human rights in the USSR. A Russian question as to their feeling of "responsibility for French influence" on developments in the Soviet Union was ignored. Asked about Gorbachov's impact, a French thinker said the main result was "a huge traffic jam in Paris." A Soviet participant, Alexander Tsipko, let some disappointment show with his remark that "only the Germans, after undergoing defeat, have allowed themselves the luxury of analyzing what is wrong."



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov

The French don't need to demand the truth from us. We've come a long way." His only answer from the French intelligentsia was to be told pompously that "the truth will make you free."

The day of Gorbachov's arrival, media attention focused on a demonstration at the Paris stock exchange by holders of prerevolutionary Tsarist bonds demanding their—or their grandparents'—money back from Moscow. They were filled with the self-righteousness of a just cause. Nobody pointed out that the bonds were a result of French pressure to keep Russia in a war that caused its collapse and ensuing revolution, in order to help France win back Alsace-Lorraine from Germany in World War I.

The selective truth of the French media serves to justify the policy choices of the political class, notably support for France's nuclear *force de frappe*. Gorbymania is a direct threat to the French nuclear arsenal. The media may have hidden public opinion more effectively than they formed it. In one of the polls taken before the Gorbachov visit, "disarmament of all nuclear forces" was chosen by the French as top international priority. This taboo notion came in ahead of the European Single Market, which the media has been stressing almost daily for years. The French people are apparently learning their lesson, no matter how haltingly and slowly. □

By Chris Norton

SAN SALVADOR

EL SALVADOR'S FAR-RIGHT NATIONALIST Republican Alliance (Arena) has spent several years carefully crafting an image of moderation as part of its successful effort to gain U.S. acceptance and win this past March's presidential election. Nonetheless, Arena's hard-line roots are visible in the new Cabinet and in repressive "anti-terrorist" legislation the party has introduced in the Arena-controlled Assembly.

Moderate conservative technocrats in the mold of Georgetown-educated President Alfredo Cristiani dominate the Cabinet posts dealing with the economy and finance. But hard-liners linked to party founder and reputed former death squad leader Ret. Maj. Roberto D'Aubuisson control the key political positions in ministries dealing with security. These appointments cast into doubt Cristiani's promises that his government will respect human rights and work toward an end to the decade-old conflict with leftist rebels of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

Although the cosmopolitan Cristiani replaced D'Aubuisson as head of Arena in 1985 when it became clear the U.S. would never allow a D'Aubuisson-led Arena win, former military intelligence officer D'Aubuisson remains the party's undisputed leader and the power behind the throne in the Cristiani government.

The right-wing stuff: Aware of his image problem abroad, D'Aubuisson has deliberately kept a low profile, allowing Cristiani to project Arena's new moderate image. But the tough-talking and sarcastic D'Aubuisson controls both Arena's majority in the Assembly and the party machinery. D'Aubuisson allies and hard-liners have emerged in key posts in the new government.

- Vice President Francisco Merino, a D'Aubuisson crony, will also become the interior minister. "Merino will have all the country's mayors and municipal police under his control," notes a diplomat. Merino has called for the formation of a civilian intelligence network to collaborate with military intelligence in detecting the leftist rebels, prompting the Catholic Church to warn that such networks would bear resemblance to death squads. Vice Minister of Interior Carlos Humberto Figuerora is a retired colonel and hard-line rightist. Another Interior Ministry appointment, new head of immigration Col. Maximiliano Leiva, worked in the same death squad-linked intelligence unit as D'Aubuisson.

- Jose Antonio Rodriguez Porth, an intellectual of the extreme right, was named Cristiani's chief of staff before being assassinated on June 9. A Rodriguez Porth protégé, Mauricio Eduardo Colorado, is now serving as attorney general. Observers worry that he will be shy to investigate human rights abuses by his own government.

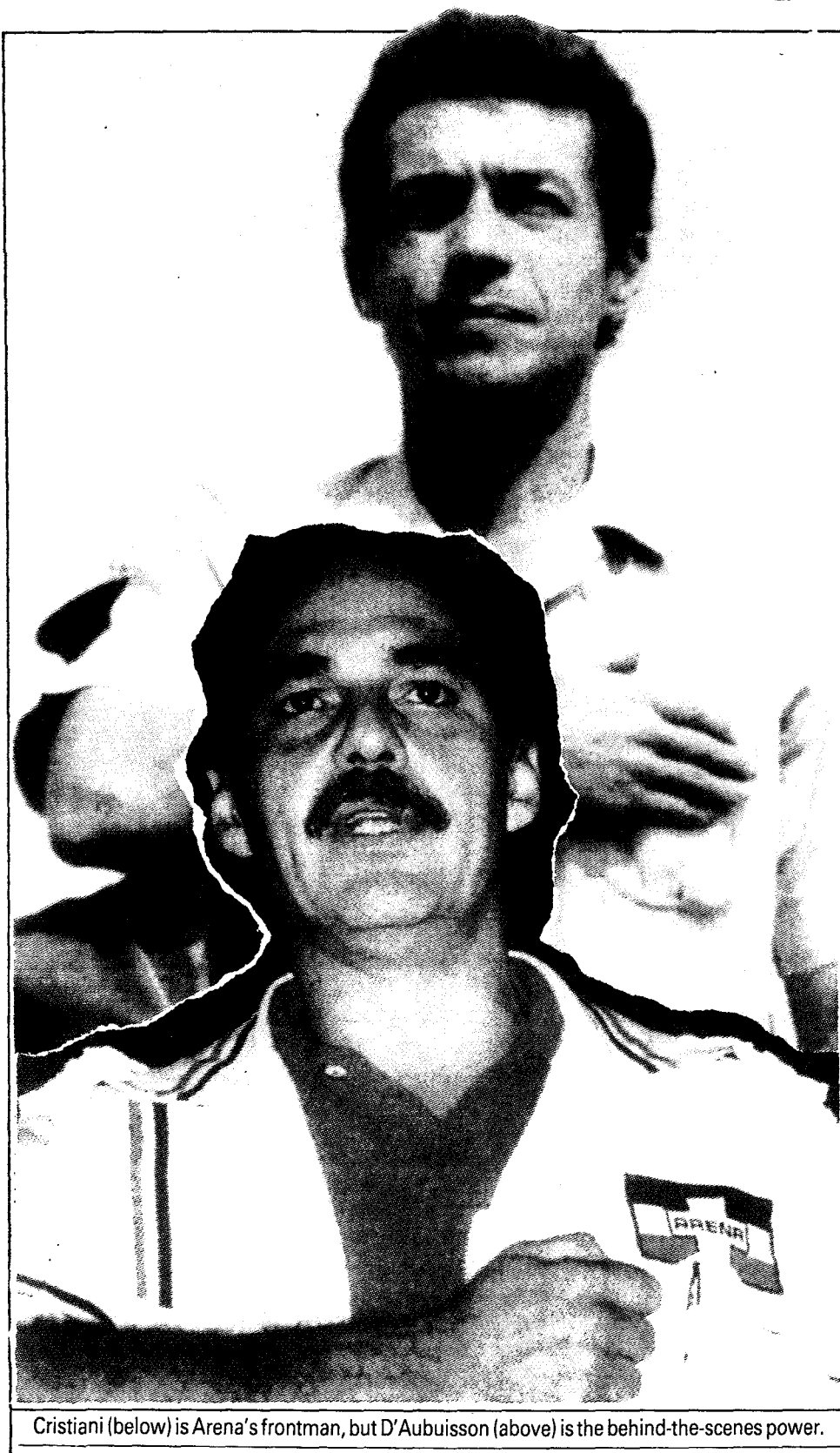
- D'Aubuisson's personal lawyer and fellow Arena founder, Jose Francisco Guerrero, was appointed Cristiani's private secretary.

- Hard-line former Col. Sigifredo Ochoa Perez was named to head the state-run electrical utility, CEL, which has a private security force of 450 men.

- Arena hard-liner Gonzalez Suvillaga was named to head the water utility, ANDA. He served in the national guard with D'Aubuisson and then went to work for the far-right Regalado family before working security for Arena.

Unfriendly skies: Cristiani was indecisive in his most important nomination—de-

Familiarity with Arena should breed contempt



Cristiani (below) is Arena's frontman, but D'Aubuisson (above) is the behind-the-scenes power.

fense minister, leading to a messy fight within the armed forces. The new president initially promised the position to the far-right head of the air force, Gen. Juan Rafael

EL SALVADOR

Bustillo, who is supported by Arena hard-liners. But the Bush administration, which plans to provide \$85 million to El Salvador's military in fiscal year 1990, let the army know that Bustillo was unacceptable. Cristiani then decided to offer the post to the U.S. favorite—Chief of Staff Col. Rene Emilio Ponce.

Bustillo, however, reacted angrily and defiantly, grounding the air force's planes and leaving the army without air support in its war against the FMLN. In the end, while the U.S. succeeded in vetoing Bustillo, Arena hard-liners were able to nix Ponce. They finally accepted a compromise candidate, Gen. Rafael Larios, who had been vice minister of defense. Larios may prove to be only

a transition defense minister, and the same fight may be replayed within a year.

Additionally, Arena hard-liners blocked the appointment of Ponce's choices for vice ministers of defense and facilitated the appointments of two officers closer to Arena, Col. Orlando Zepeda and Col. Orlando Montano, for the positions. Zepeda, an anti-communist zealot, caused a controversy this spring when he swore in a group of rightist businessmen who were forming a paramilitary group called a "Patriotic Civil Defense." The Catholic Church and outgoing President Duarte denounced the group for its similarities to the death squads. Although Duarte angrily ordered the group disbanded, it doubtless continues to function, albeit more discreetly.

Same old torture: Although some have predicted a "bloodbath" under an Arena government—and some Arena hardliners have called for "total war"—most analysts predict no drastic changes in the army's strategy of "selective repression" of suspected guerrilla

supporters. "We aren't going to see a serious increase in repression and perhaps even an easing," said Ruben Zamora, of the leftist Popular Social Christian Movement. "Arena needs to present its credentials, especially in the United States, as a civilized government."

While the military's "dirty war" of selective assassinations of mid-level labor leaders will continue, most analysts believe that Arena will also try to repress the opposition labor movement using legal forms. Arrests have already increased dramatically this year, and this trend is expected to continue. Salvadoran arrests are not pleasant—the detainee is usually kept standing blindfolded and handcuffed during round-the-clock interrogations for the entire 72 hours of detention that the constitution permits. Detainees are often not allowed to eat, drink or rest during those 72 hours. Rapes, beatings and torture are common.

Arrestees are frequently abducted at gunpoint by plain-clothes police officers who impersonate death squad members to

Despite the new moderate image of the ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance and President Alfredo Cristiani, the party is still under the control of the far right.

further terrify their victims. Physical torture seems to be increasing. Many of the 76 people arrested in refugee and labor offices April 19 were beaten by the treasury police and were suffocated with a rubber bag—called the *capucha*—until they passed out, according to the detainees. Telephone union leader Jose Tomas Mazariego says interrogators tortured him with the *capucha* and poured acid on his knees.

Something new, something old: Another sign of things to come is Arena's proposed "anti-terrorist" legislation, which would greatly increase penalties for "subversive" actions—and would leave it up to the Arena-controlled police and courts to determine, case by case, what those actions are. Opposition deputies from the Christian Democrats and the Party of National Conciliation denounced the legislation as being designed to silence popular opposition to economic austerity measures being prepared by Arena.

Also of concern is the return of several of the military officers with notorious death squad connections who were forced into diplomatic exile under pressure from Washington in 1983. Among them are Hector Antonio Regalado, who allegedly ran death squads in the eastern part of the country and headed security for Arena; Col. Denis Moran, who headed the intelligence section of the national guard and whose driver was convicted for the January 1981 Sheraton Hotel killings of two U.S. labor advisers; and Nicolas Carranza, who headed the treasury police when its intelligence section formed one of the most notorious death squads. Carranza also received \$90,000 a year from the CIA for over five years before he was sent into diplomatic exile in Europe.

Chris Norton is *In These Times'* correspondent in El Salvador.

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Peasants cultivating potatoes near Esteli, Nicaragua: land reform has worked in favor of the environment.

By Dick Russell

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA

AFTER THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION overthrew the Somoza regime here in July 1979, Nicaragua's new government drafted the first constitution in the world to include environmental restoration. Often acting in concert with American companies, Somoza had devastated tropical rain forests and allowed the world's highest human death rates due to pesticide poisoning.

"Not only humans desired liberation," says Sandinista Minister of Culture Ernesto Cardenal. "The entire ecology cried out for it. The revolution is also for lakes, rivers, trees and animals."

The first decade under Sandinista rule has witnessed the implementation of numerous environmental programs, considered by many experts to provide a model for sustainable development policies in the Third World. But the contra war, coupled with an American economic blockade that began in 1985, has hindered environmental progress.

"We have not been able to reverse the processes of degradation," says Lorenzo Cardenal, a special adviser on the environment to Nicaragua's natural resources agency. "All of our environmental management programs are in crisis right now."

Yankee ingenuity: Perhaps the most notable remnants of Gen. Anastasio Somoza's environmental despoilment are two American chemical companies, Pennwalt and Hercules. Both set up shop here in the '60s in a successful effort to avoid stringent regulation of their products in the U.S., and both continue to operate on the shoreline of Lake Managua. While the Bush administration maintains a trade embargo as "an essential element" of a policy "that seeks a democratic outcome in Nicaragua," no such sanctions apply to these two multinational companies.

Hercules—which produced the carcinogenic herbicide Agent Orange in the U.S. during the Vietnam era (see *In These Times*)

Saving the environment from war, waste and want

three-part series on Jacksonville, Ark., March 1988)—manufactures a potent pesticide called toxaphene in Managua. This pesticide is used primarily on cotton. In 1986 the Environmental Protection Agency banned the use of toxaphene on U.S. crops because of its cancer-causing potential. But Hercules continues to export this extremely long-last-

NICARAGUA

ing pesticide from Nicaragua to other Latin American nations. Pennwalt, one of the five makers of ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons in the U.S., runs a large-scale chlorine facility in Managua. This plant produces carbon tetrachloride, the fourth-largest ozone-depleter, and other chlorine-based chemicals, using a process called "mercury catalysis." Between 1968 and 1981, Pennwalt dumped an estimated 40 tons of mercury—a deadly element with long-term potency—into Lake Managua, according to the Nicaraguan government.

In 1980, the new Sandinista government ordered the company to reduce by two-thirds the waste it dumps into the water. But, according to a spokesman for Nicaragua's Institute for Natural Resources (DIRENA), "Pennwalt continues to use very obsolete technology, [leaving waste products] contaminated with heavy metals. The discharge from their system still leaks mercury into the effluents. Studies of the lake's water and sediments show that there is definitely mercury present. The amount that people who eat fish from the lake take in, we just don't know."

According to the San Francisco-based Environmental Project on Central America (EPOCA), a few years ago contaminated

water from Lake Managua began seeping into the neighboring Asososca Lagoon, the drinking water reservoir for the 1 million residents of the capital city.

In recent months people living near the Pennwalt plant have also begun suffering from respiratory discomfort and have complained to the Ministry of Health. DIRENA has yet to release a report concerning Pennwalt's airborne chlorine releases, but, says its spokesman, "a lot of chlorine escapes [into the air] because the metals on [the company's] old machinery are corroded. Pennwalt now says it will invest about \$4 million to reconstruct the system."

Greenbacks over green movements: Why these companies have been allowed to remain in Nicaragua is no mystery. "The Nicaraguan government is walking on eggshells between its efforts to regulate the multinationals operating there and its efforts to renew relations with the U.S.," says EPOCA's Joshua Karliner.

Explains Victor Tirado Lopez, one of Nicaragua's nine-member ruling directorate, "Under the conditions in which we inherited the country, an industrial conversion is very difficult. We can't eliminate these companies because of unemployment, because of salaries." Others in the government add that, in an increasingly desperate economic situation, the country needs the foreign exchange generated by the multinationals.

"What the revolution tried to do was give people a chance to look at the long term," adds Xabier Gorostiaga, of Nicaragua's Regional Center for Social and Economic Research. "But the war has forced us to function on a day-to-day basis."

With 60 percent of the Nicaraguan government's budget still targeted for defense,

many of its pioneering ecological programs have been put on hold. Nonetheless, some progress has been made toward accomplishing the revolution's lofty ecological goals.

- **Land reform.** Under Somoza, large landowners monopolized the best agricultural terrain, and peasants were forced to clear marginal areas. This misuse of agricultural land resulted in rampant soil erosion, deforestation and pesticide abuse. The Sandinistas' agrarian reforms redistributed approximately 50 percent of the cultivable farmland—some 5 million acres—to over 112,000 landless peasant families. The Ministry of Agriculture introduced a policy to discourage farming of marginal lands and encouraged peasants to grow ecologically sustainable crops such as coconut, African palm, cocoa and plantain.

- **Forestry.** Thirty percent of Nicaragua's rain forests, still the largest in Central America, disappeared during the '70s. Foreign logging companies, predominantly from the U.S., gutted massive tracts of pine forests. More forests were cleared for cattle grazing, making Nicaragua the biggest Latin American beef supplier to fast-food chains and pet food companies in the U.S. But nationalization of foreign corporations has controlled logging and halted the "hamburger connection." DIRENA also initiated numerous native tree planting schemes and began regenerating the northern pine forests.

- **Pesticides.** Under Somoza, Nicaragua had become the leading per capita user of pesticides in the world. Pesticide imports have since been reduced 50 percent. And the Sandinista government has enforced a prohibition on all chemicals that are banned in their country of origin (with the notable exception of Hercules' toxaphene). Farming techniques that reduce the need for pesticides have been introduced for all cotton production.

Despite these advances, as Nicaraguan Vice President Sergio Ramirez told a recent international environmental conference here, "all our hope and energies have les-

Pioneers—at least on paper—in protecting their nation's ecology, the Sandinistas have been hampered by a troubled economy, a U.S.-backed counterrevolution and natural disasters.

sened as resources were restrained by the war. We could no longer have these programs as a high priority."

Trees—victims of war: In fact, targeting the Sandinistas' environmental programs has long been standard procedure for the U.S.-backed contras. A 1983 contra attack at the Northeast Forestry Project left 250 square miles of reforested coastal pine destroyed by fire, according to EPOCA. In 1985—at the time when the boll weevil, a cotton-destroying beetle, was to be sprayed in a pest-control program—the contras burned down the warehouse that held the country's supply of a relatively safe, government-approved pesticide. The government was forced to use old stocks of the lethal pesticide DDT that had been confiscated after the revolution. And according to the Washington-based Environmental Policy In-

stitute (EPI), contras have killed or kidnapped more than 75 environmental and natural resource employees over the last four years.

This systematic "ecological warfare" is not over yet. Since Nicaragua has no known fossil fuel reserves and can no longer import oil from the U.S. under the embargo, the Sandinistas have seen the development of renewable energy resources like hydroelectric power as their only long-term solution. In June 1989, in violation of the peace accords, contras moving across the Honduran border attacked and damaged one of the nation's few hydroelectric facilities.

At the same time, under the U.S. "humanitarian aid" program to the contras, the Agency for International Development (AID) has contracted a private consulting firm, Creative Associates International, to provide chainsaw safety training to the contras in Honduras. There have been numerous

Broke and battered, the Nicaraguans have nevertheless sought to protect what they can of their biosphere.

reports of the contras using chainsaws to fell trees along the border, not only for construction but for contraband sale to Honduran lumber mills and tobacco factories. A United Nations and Honduran government report documents \$125 million worth of destruction of forest resources by contra refugees and other undocumented foreigners in Honduras over the last eight years.

As if the war's devastation wasn't bad enough, in October 1988 Hurricane Joan tore through Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. "Hurricane Joan turned forests there into what some say is a destroyed ecosystem, perhaps permanently, of approximately 500,000 hectares," says John Vandermeer of the University of Michigan, who was part of an international expedition to assess the storm damage.

On a shoestring: Due to the economic crisis, the once-autonomous DIRENA agency has been merged into the agricultural ministry. All its regional offices have had to shut down. And its budget of only \$80,000 a year was sliced by another two-thirds in June after soaring inflation forced huge cutbacks in all of the country's administrative programs.

The government maintains no money exists to prevent 700,000 pounds of untreated sewage from pouring into Lake Managua every day. "There has been much brainstorming, and we would like to bring a modern plant into the area," says a DIRENA employee, "but that is a colossal project."

No money exists to prevent Nicaragua's new geothermal energy plant—the world's largest—from leaking toxic discharges into Lake Managua, according to a DIRENA source. Otherwise, the renewable energy program might be considered a model for developing nations.

No money exists for garbage collection; only half of the garbage in Managua is regularly collected. While recycling of bottles is mandatory, a DIRENA spokesman says, "we are trying to create a consciousness for separating garbage to recycle and producing compost. There are some pilot projects at the schools, but this is the very beginning. The idea is to distribute bags to the population, but they would probably use them for

something else more important to them, because bags are scarce."

Yet despite all these limitations, the Sandinista government continues to take other measures to protect the environment—even when economic pressures would seem to demand otherwise. In June 1987, for example, President Daniel Ortega cancelled a timber concession to a Costa Rican logging firm that would have threatened 1,200 square miles of tropical rain forest along Nicaragua's southern border. The lumber produced by the concession would have more than doubled Nicaragua's annual timber output and given it \$2.5 million annually in badly needed foreign exchange. Clearing out the forest would also have eliminated contra hideaways. But Ortega nixed the 20-year contract after protests by the 450-member Nicaraguan Association of Biologists and Ecologists (ABEN) that opening up the forest would result in an "ecological tragedy."

Instead, in February 1988 Costa Rica and Nicaragua signed a letter of intent to create an international biosphere reserve along their shared and troubled border. Known as Si-A-Paz ("Yes to Peace"), the project aims to protect natural resources on both sides of the border along the San Juan River—conserving about 2,500 square kilometers of rain forest and wetlands—and promote sustainable economic development in surrounding zones. EPOCA and EPI are pushing the U.S. to join Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands

in lending financial support to the project. Key to this, says EPI, is resettlement of the contras who still operate in the region.

A major obstacle to creating the reserve is Japan's interest in building a new "Panama

Nicaragua has a chance to create a new development model. Currently, Washington is crushing that chance, and crushing the hope for our planet.

Canal" across Nicaragua's southern border, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Environmentalists in Nicaragua say the Sandinistas have purportedly given Japanese business interests a go-ahead to conduct a feasibility study. "That whole area of Lake Nicaragua and the San Juan River are the lungs of our country," says a Nicaraguan environmentalist. "It would be regrettable if we destroyed this ecosystem just to make a channel."

Making the model work: Meanwhile, grass-roots groups, particularly the Nicaragua Environmental Movement, are joining forces with government ministries in pushing for new, locally based, environmental restoration centers. The centers would,

among other things, improve education and community involvement in the protection of mangrove forests and facilitate planting of windbreaks to prevent soil erosion. Some foreign aid, again from Scandinavia and Holland, has arrived, but much more is needed. "Unless we can build such centers, our natural resources will no longer be able to uphold our economy," says ABEN's Camilo Lara. But Washington has blocked development loans that otherwise might have been approved by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank.

One idea now being promoted by David Brower, chairman of San Francisco's Earth Island Institute, is to build an International Restoration Center in Managua. Here, ecologists would research and seek to implement model programs for developing nations. Brower is lobbying for the U.S.' contra "humanitarian aid" to be funneled into the project—but American policymakers are hardly expected to bite.

As EPOCA's Joshua Karliner summarizes, "The environmental and economic crises in Nicaragua are really a microcosm of what's happening in the rest of the Third World. Nicaragua has created the opportunity for finding a new development model. Currently our government is crushing that opportunity. And if we crush that hope, I believe we are also crushing the hope for the future of the planet."

Dick Russell writes regularly for *In These Times* on environmental issues.

Abortion

Continued from page 6

tures, which have been highly susceptible to anti-abortion lobbying. During the week following the ruling, anti-choice politicians in states around the country announced plans to enact laws similar to Missouri's. All state legislatures have recessed for the summer, but some lawmakers are calling for special sessions to push through the now-legal abortion restrictions. By fall, most state legislatures will be considering laws to govern how and when a woman can terminate a pregnancy.

Pro-choice leaders say tactics will vary from state to state. In the few friendly legislatures the group will seek "right to privacy" legislation, which would secure abortion rights, but in others the groups hope to fend off abortion restrictions. In states where the legislature is strongly opposed to abortion rights, the groups may push for a voter initiative, circumventing the legislature and putting abortion rights on the ballot. Sixteen states, including California, allow such initiatives.

NARAL recently published a political profile of each state, analyzing the abortion-rights positions of the governor, lieutenant governor and state legislature. "It will be a guide for a lot of our work, in terms of how and where we direct our resources," says Alison Gee, executive director of Voters for Choice, a Washington, D.C.-based political action committee. "I don't think we will write off any states, but we will concentrate on states where we know we can make a difference."

While the pro-choice groups have not yet hammered out precise tactics, they have planned several political pushes.

• In early August NOW will send a team of organizers on a nationwide tour, called the Freedom Caravan for Women's Lives. Travelling from city to city, the organizers will train local pro-choice groups, lead rallies, help set up phone banks and initiate pro-choice lobby days in each state capital. NOW plans to train state coordinators who

can put together regional caravans.

A similar caravan traveled through Indiana in the early '80s, mobilizing supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment, and the ERA was later approved in that state. NOW staff members say the caravan-style training sessions were among their most successful tools in the Indiana ERA push.

• Planned Parenthood is scheduling regional training sessions for grass-roots organizers throughout the fall. The training will be aimed at promoting large public-education campaigns around abortion. Planned Parenthood will sponsor similar public education programs on college campuses this year.

• While admitting it's a long-shot, the pro-choice groups will introduce federal right-to-privacy legislation that would ensure abortion rights. Rep. Don Edwards, the California Democrat who heads the House Judiciary subcommittee on civil and constitutional rights, has said Congress will consider some type of legislation to ensure that abortion remains legal. A committee spokesman says the legislation could come in the form of a civil rights package.

• NOW President Molly Yard announced plans for a march on Washington to protest the Webster decision in late October. Yard says the mobilization will dwarf the April march in favor of abortion rights that attracted 300,000 to 600,000 demonstrators.

During the April march NOW organizers collected nearly 300,000 names and addresses of pro-choice advocates, which have been sent to the NOW state offices. These will become the core of statewide networks of pro-choice voters. "We have already identified an awful lot of people. These will be the ones who will write letters and make phone calls to their legislators, governors and representatives," says Sheri O'Dell, a NOW vice president and organizer of the April march.

"The point is, you identify them and you plug them into a network where they can

make their voices heard," O'Dell adds.

Both sides of the debate predict abortion will be a pivotal issue in upcoming state and federal elections. Until now only the anti-abortion side has successfully created an army of single-issue voters. But pro-choice leaders say that the Webster decision has injected a new urgency into the fight.

Focusing on legislative elections, the pro-choice groups intend to make abortion rights a litmus test. Some groups will likely model the campaign on a Westchester County, N.Y., project, The Coalition for Legal Abortions (WCLA). The group is credited with defeating anti-choice Republican Rep. Joseph J. DioGuardi last fall, sending Democrat Nita M. Lowey to Washington. WCLA Director Polly Rothstein says the group did extensive voter identification during the race, calling more than 98,000 women. When the candidates' abortion positions were clearly defined, hundreds of voters, particularly women, crossed party lines to vote for Lowey, Rothstein says.

Pro-choice groups are also paying close attention to elections this fall in New Jersey and Virginia (see story on page 7). Abortion legislation has emerged as a leading issue in both states. NOW's O'Dell says that New Jersey's gubernatorial race, which pits pro-choice Democratic Rep. James Florio against anti-choice GOP Rep. Jim Courter, is a good example of how pro-choice political strategies will work.

During the week following the Supreme Court decision, Florio took a decisive lead in the polls and Courter, who has been a strong abortion opponent in the House, announced that he would not propose any anti-abortion legislation.

"We're making the legislators very nervous. Everybody is going to have to take a stand, and there is no place to run and hide. What we're going to see is some of the strongest opponents of abortion backing off so that they can hold onto their jobs," says O'Dell.

REVOLUTIONS ARE ALWAYS DIFFICULT affairs. But perhaps none before Nicaragua's Sandinista revolution has had such a peculiar set of problems heaped on it. Made by men and women of socialist inspiration, Central America's first revolution has consistently found its road blocked by the geopolitical realities of the '80s, including a chronically underdeveloped economy. But the biggest roadblock has been the destructive hostility of a U.S. government never tolerant of change that threatens Washington's control of Latin America.

All of this has been frustrating for the young revolutionaries of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) who took power July 19, 1979. Not the least of their frustrations has been that of explaining to the ordinary citizen the changes that the Sandinistas hope to bring about—a "revolution with private property."

According to the Sandinistas' original mixed-economy plan, capitalism in Nicaragua would not be liquidated. It could, however, be steered in such a way as to benefit the traditionally neglected populace and kept from expanding. The rich would be deprived of some of their land and the income deriving from it, although most private landowners would be encouraged to continue producing. Meanwhile state and cooperative entrepreneurs would take the lead in generating the nation's wealth. Though the result would not be completely "socialist," it would at least forge an economy on the road to development that would work for the first time in favor of the disenfranchised "popular classes."

Such was the theory. Although the Sandinistas have implemented it with zigs and zags, the end result is clear enough. The earth beneath Nicaraguan peasant farmers' feet—some 5 million acres of land now distributed or titled to the *campesinos*—is tangible proof of the Sandinistas' contention that their agrarian reform program, unlike some in Latin America, has teeth. A diminishing bourgeoisie seething with resentment over the revolution's attack on its privileges—some collaborating with Washington's efforts at destabilization and sabotage—is also proof that the Sandinista's basic class commitment is intact after 10 years in power.

But even as the revolution celebrates its first decade with a huge rally in Managua, all is clearly not well. After eight years of overt counterrevolutionary aggression, the Sandinistas have developed a military apparatus that has contained the threat from U.S.-backed contra guerrillas. But with the inauguration of U.S. President George Bush in January, the country entered a new phase that may prove even more challenging. More than ever, the Nicaraguan revolutionaries face a set of serious problems and dilemmas.

Renewed urgency for development:

The critical question now is how to manage an economy devastated by 11 years of war and revolution. Today Nicaragua is one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere. Contrary to various reports—such as a recent *New York Times* article—placing the country as the most impoverished in the hemisphere, the country's per capita annual income is between \$500 and \$600 and has not fallen below Haiti's \$330. Nor do living standards approach those of Somalia or the Sudan, as critics imply. But per capita production has shrunk by about one-third since

1980. Basic consumption has dropped by more than half, while by conservative estimates more than 10 percent of the population has emigrated.

Not only is the economy still sliding, but the Sandinistas' current stabilization drive, designed to overcome 1988's horrendous hyperinflation of 36,000 percent, is hurting those the revolution most wants to help, Nicaragua's workers.

The bulk of the responsibility for this situation lies squarely on the Reagan administration's doorstep. Whatever the Sandinista leaders' errors, and they have been numerous, no revolution suffering 50,000 dead and an estimated \$12 billion in damages can be expected to end its first decade in vibrant health. Adding to the picture are natural disasters such as droughts, severe flooding and a devastating hurricane.

Yet at this point assigning the blame is less important than finding a way forward. If present downward trends continue, Nicaragua does risk sinking into African-style impoverishment. Recovery and development are imperative.

Need for a new "popular project":

Thinking ahead to a development strategy—or what the Sandinistas call a "popular project"—in the middle of crisis is no easy task. Since early last year the government has undertaken numerous measures aimed at stabilizing the economy, such as currency devaluations and budget cuts. Complaining of the difficulties facing this effort, economist Xabier Gorostiaga of the Managua-based Regional Center for Social and Economic Research says that "at this point there's no medium or long-range development policy.

Neither Marx nor Keynes could manage that in an economy suffering 30 percent inflation per month."

Simply put, *Sandinismo* at age 10 lacks coherence. At some point during the '80s, the government's attempts to replace the capitalist engine of growth with state enterprise and a loose form of planning fell flat. The government has tried to encourage capitalists to cooperate, despite land reform and state marketing of private industry's products. But the Sandinistas still have not devised a coherent socialist alternative for generating the wealth needed to lift the Nicaraguan people out of poverty. One of the reasons for that is a chronic shortage of skilled entrepreneurs willing to help in building the "new" economy. As the years of war sharpened political polarization, many of the country's most educated and talented people fled the country. Others, sympathetic to the U.S. effort to wreak havoc with the economy, produce only the bare minimum to avoid confiscation.

As early state-administered farms proved to be highly inefficient, the government initiated a gradual shift to "privatized" cooperatives, in which peasants are given title to the land and are paid based on what they produce. Carlos Fernando Chamorro, editor of the Sandinista newspaper *Barricada*, argues that "our agrarian transformation is consolidating cooperatives and the land given to the peasants as productive economic units." Though this is unquestionably the base for a modest agrarian socialism, it is a slow road fraught with difficulties.

Faced with urgent pressures such as a growing population and increasing mal-

nourishment, policymakers will inevitably suffer the temptation to seek quick development fixes.

One such fix is foreign investment, which Nicaragua is actively seeking. In economist Gorostiaga's opinion, it can be obtained. If Nicaragua's government can negotiate peace with the U.S., he argues, large flows of foreign investment can be expected from Western Europe. That, however, may cause as many problems as it solves, as overreliance on foreign investors could simply regenerate the kind of dependent capitalism the revolution was fought to overthrow.

This year the Sandinistas have tried to reach out to the private sector in a process known as *concertacion*—forging a government-business pact for economic recovery—in part to demonstrate to the world that ideological differences can be put aside for the benefit of the country. Yet the challenge of recovery remains precisely how to define Nicaragua's own priorities and subordinate both foreign and domestic capitalists to them.

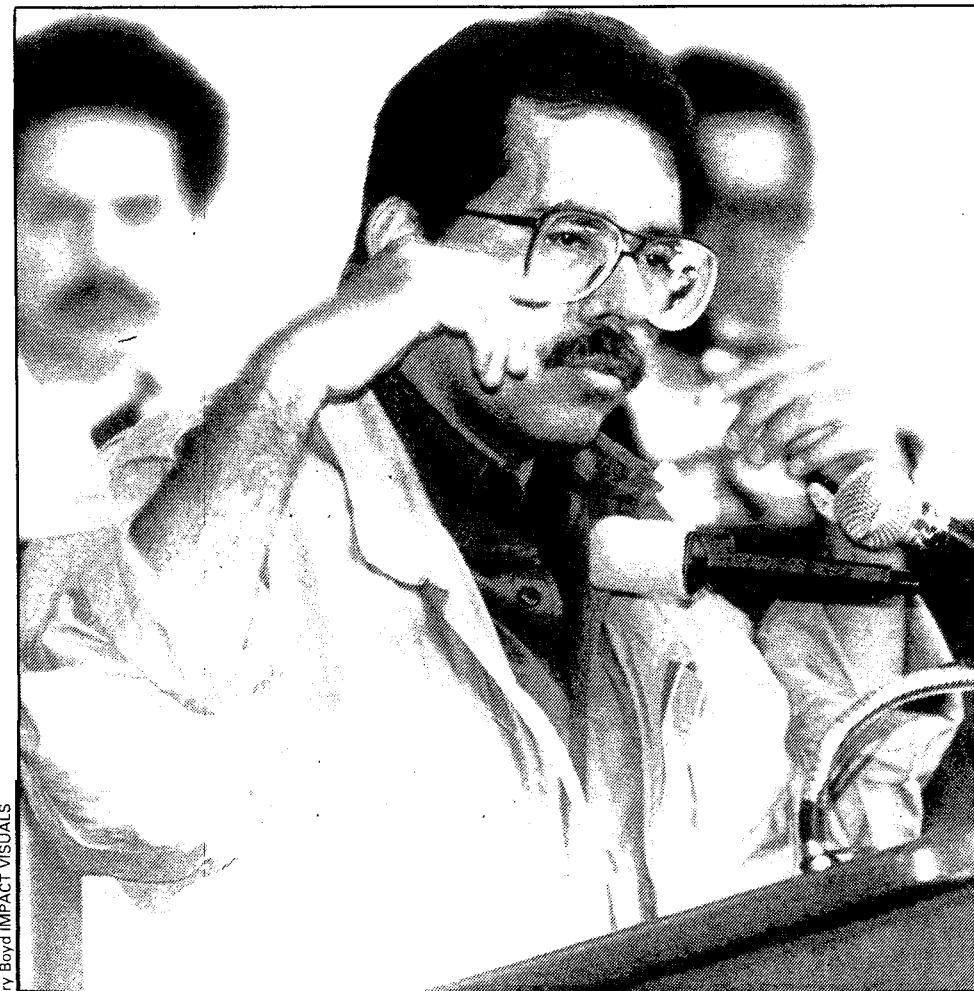
Escaping international encirclement:

Complicating the search for a new popular project is the reality of Nicaragua's international position. After a decade of "non-aligned" foreign policy, the Sandinistas find themselves with an implacable adversary to the north, dubious allies in Western Europe and a less-intimate relationship with the Soviet bloc.

The Bush administration's "bipartisan policy approach" of forging congressional agreement on Nicaragua has successfully turned the U.S. attack on Nicaragua from a hot military war, in which the contras were the principal tool, to a political war. But the major weapons are still those of destabilization. Both the congressionally funded National Endowment for Democracy, with its \$3.5 million in above-board money, and covert CIA operations recently authorized by Congress will help Nicaragua's right-wing opposition simultaneously to contest and to sabotage Nicaragua's national elections set for next February. While maintaining 12,000 contras in Honduran base camps (and rotating small task forces through northern war zones) as an "insurance policy," Bush continues Ronald Reagan's economic boycott.

The Sandinistas would like to find a counterweight to the U.S. in the European Economic Community, but its "friends" there are unreliable. The Scandinavian countries, principally Sweden, have been faithful in their assistance, but other countries make conditions on potential aid. On a recent visit, West Germany's minister of foreign cooperation made it clear that Europe regarded compromise by the Sandinistas with the private sector as a precondition for assistance. Most West European leaders also bow to Washington's claims on Latin America as its own. U.S. pressures on governments and multilateral institutions sharply limited the gains from President Daniel Ortega's 10-nation fundraising trip to Europe in May to a scant \$50 million. He had hoped for \$250 million.

At the same time the Soviet Union,



Nicaraguans are increasingly criticizing the top-down management style of President Ortega's government.



There's been a gradual shift from state-run farms to "privatized" cooperatives.

Nicaragua's main supplier of military and economic assistance so far, is signaling the limits of its commitment. Seeking to get his own house in order, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov is increasingly reluctant to sign the virtual blank check Moscow has offered to Nicaragua over the revolution's first decade. The bottom-line implication for the new revolutionary project is simple: aside perhaps from the Cubans, the Sandinistas lack allies willing to help them develop in a manner of their own choosing.

The 1990 elections are the key: The February 1990 elections are the key to the Sandinista revolution's future. Having committed themselves to winning competitive electoral contests, the Sandinistas must do so fairly and convincingly. Whether the objective is furthering negotiations with the U.S. or attracting funds from Europe, the Sandinistas must come out of the balloting with a legitimate mandate and overcome Washington's campaign to prove the elections will be fraudulent. While the government has recently reformed electoral laws and selected a supreme electoral council, the U.S. routinely echoes opposition charges that the measures are insufficient or merely cosmetic.

After years of economic crisis and declining living standards, the Sandinistas go into this contest with their popular support sagging. Opinion poll results from urban areas regularly show the FSLN holding slightly more than 30 percent of the electorate, with 20 percent or so backing one or another faction of Nicaragua's splintered opposition.

Given the opposition's fragmentation, this will probably be enough of a margin for a Sandinista victory. But it's not a comfortable plurality. When pollsters from the non-parti-

san Itztani Research Center asked urban voters in June whether they would vote "opposition" if all of the Sandinistas' opponents got together in a single alliance, some 32 percent responded affirmatively. The conclusion is inescapable: the Sandinistas' electoral position at this point rests as much on their opponents' division as it does on the revolution's inherent strength.

A second conclusion inevitably follows. What the FSLN needs most urgently is a strategy for winning back to the fold some of the great number of Nicaraguans who have become disillusioned with the revolution. A political party can win elections with minority backing, but it cannot propel a "popular" revolution with the support of only 30 percent of the people.

Encouraging popular participation: Recovering that support means, among other things, revamping and infusing new vitality into institutions for popular input into government. For 10 years, the most important such institution in Nicaragua has been the network of neighborhood-level organizations known as Sandinista Defense Committees. Modeled after similar bodies in Cuba, the committees were intended to be the basic vehicle for solving community problems through grass-roots participation. But after the euphoric early '80s, the committees largely fell into disuse as membership plummeted.

Last year Omar Cabezas, author of the best-selling memoir *Fire from the Mountain*, took over national direction of the block committees and set about reinvigorating them. He blames their problems on the top-down approach with which the Sandinistas went about mobilizing their supporters. "The masses," he says, "were sent down directives from on high that had nothing to do with their problems. In addition to engendering

a deformed work style, the masses ended up being replaced by officialdom."

Since the middle of 1988, this "vertical" style of political organization has been turned on its head through a process of painful review. Relates Cabezas, "We've had to make our cadres understand that what was good before is bad now, what was normal before is abnormal now." The strategy, he explains, has been to convert the old defense committees into a new "communitarian movement," encouraging groups of neighbors to take the lead in undertaking community tasks. The committees would then be able to respond to the problems perceived by local residents, and not just those that preoccupy Sandinista higher-ups.

To date the reforms have met with a modest renewal in participation and interest in the committees. Sandinista supporters point

to this process as evidence that flexibility and political creativity still exist in the FSLN.

Simply put, Sandinismo at age 10 lacks coherence.

While some changes are also underway in other "mass organizations," such as the Women's Association, the lessons of the defense committees still need to be applied on a more widespread basis.

Reforming the vanguard: The Sandinista National Liberation Front is a vanguard party—a hierarchical political organization characterized by quasi-military discipline that lacks internal democratic procedures and debate. To a large extent, this centralized structure evolved from the need to

fight two wars, first the insurrectionary struggle against the Somozas and then the contra war against the U.S. But with a fragile peace achieved, vanguard rule is showing the limits of its ability to promote grass-roots change among a population that is increasingly less willing to simply "be led."

For one thing, as with most political organizations, vanguards typically harbor privilege seekers. "Scratch the surface of any Nicaraguans today and you will find negative feelings about the FSLN," says teacher Robert Lemus, formerly a defense committee official. "People say the Sandinistas are all opportunists, that they live too well, even that they are bourgeois." Former Managua Mayor Moises Hassan, who renounced his membership in the FSLN last year and is the highest-ranking Sandinista dissident, insists that such feelings stem from a reality of opportunism.

And as the defense committee example shows, the "verticalism" bred by the vanguard style of political management all too frequently dampens people's desires to take part. Hassan indicates that this was one key reason for his withdrawal from the party. "I began to dislike the feeling that I had to submit and allow others to think for me," says Hassan, who was also a member of the first postrevolution government junta. "If the nine *comandantes* [who comprise the FSLN's top leadership circle] have made a decision, that's it. It cannot be questioned, unless you want to risk being marginalized very quickly."

Over the years, many others less prominent than Hassan have also left the ruling party. Sandinista loyalists, however, say the party is undergoing reform. Yet open and democratic ideas come hard to people schooled in guerrilla methods. *Barricada*

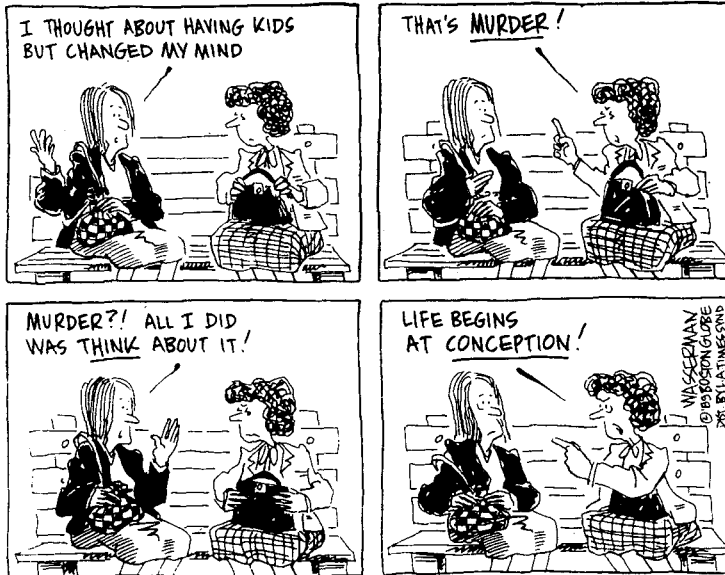
Continued on page 22

Supreme Court abortion decision opens door to politics

The Supreme Court's recent abortion decision (see pp. 5-6) is a double disaster, first because it calls into question the right of a woman to determine her own destiny, and second because it will divert American politics from the critical issues facing our country and the world and focus it instead on something that should not be the concern of government. For a woman, abortion is a painful, even traumatic decision, but it is—or should be—her decision. The government should be concerned with the welfare of its citizens—people born or naturalized in the United States. It should be focusing its attention and energies on seeing to it that all Americans have adequate health care, a good education, affordable housing and a livable minimum wage.

In short, in our view, being pro-life means being concerned for the well-being of the living. It seems clear to us that it is infinitely more important to provide people with the means to lead productive, creative lives than it is to harass women who, for whatever reason, have decided not to give birth to an unwanted child. Those who believe that abortion is immoral have a perfect right to argue their position. They do not, in our opinion, have a right to impose it on others. Nor should the state.

We believe that a large majority of Americans would support this view if it were presented to them coherently. As it is, a majority opposes the recent Supreme Court decisions, and more do not want to make abortion illegal. The pro-choice movement will now be devoting time, energy and money to defending abortion rights in the states. We believe this can be a winning battle, but that the key to its success is not in demonstrations, marches and other tradi-



tional actions. Those have value in mobilizing the committed, but they do little to educate and convince the confused and undecided. It seems to us that this moment requires a political strategy that selects the states and districts in which there is a reasonable chance of success, and the targeting of constituencies there for some old-fashioned door-to-door canvassing and educating. The battle can be won, but the media—and media events in which slogans and catchwords prevail—is not the primary arena. This struggle requires a new—but really very old—approach to politics: sustained constituency organization. There are enough resources, both human and organizational, to do the job, but it will require new thinking about political action.

Likud slams Israeli peace initiative into reverse

For seemingly endless months, the Bush administration and Israeli government leaders have been talking about something called the "peace initiative." Administration and Israeli rhetoric has centered on elections—as opposed to an international conference that would include representatives of the Palestinians and the Soviet Union—as the great hope for progress toward a solution to the 40-year war between Israel and the Palestinians. Then, two weeks ago, Yitzhak Shamir, Israel's prime minister and a leader of the ultranationalist Likud party, accepted four conditions for elections demanded by Ariel Sharon, the leader of Likud's extreme right wing. These conditions guaranteed that no elections would occur, and that the "peace process" would go from stalled into reverse—which seems to have been Likud's desire all along.

The conditions seemed to have two purposes: to humiliate the Palestinians, especially the moderates, and to send a strong signal to Israeli expansionists that the government would continue to flout world opinion. The conditions are: that Arabs in East Jerusalem will not be allowed to participate in electing representatives to negotiate with Israel, that no elections will occur until the uprising in the territories ends, that Jewish settlements will continue being built in the West Bank, and that Israel will never give up territory captured in the 1967 war.

Sharon insisted on these conditions in order to destroy any possibility of elections. "I will try to bring about a decision that will erase the entire program," he said before the meeting at which Shamir capitulated. For his part, Shamir said he agreed with the conditions and would negotiate from that point of view, but he didn't want them to be explicit because then he would be blamed for the inevitable failure. Now, after accepting the conditions, Shamir insists that they mean nothing. "All this noise is artificial," he says. "The government's initiative has not been changed at all." And guess what—the Bush administration agrees. The proposal is still alive, an administration spokesman said two weeks ago, because the Israeli government has not formally changed its terms. There is a cynical truth to this—what happened is that its leader just agreed to let the cat out of the bag.

All this has been too much for the Labor party, which is the junior partner in Israel's coalition government. Labor's supporters—and even some of its leaders—are willing to trade land for peace. They want an end to the war, which now threatens to destroy Israel even in the absence of an armed enemy. "The Likud Central Committee decision has severely affected even the possibility of raising the peace initiative," said Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin after Labor's executive board voted to withdraw from the government. And Labor Party leader Shimon Peres added that Labor will no longer "be a fig leaf for Likud. We will not be a fig leaf for tragedy."

Unfortunately this realization has come too late. Tragedy has been the order of the day for some time now, though Shamir's admission that what is now explicit was always his private agenda may have ended the last possibility of a stable peace. In Syria, Information Minister Mohammed Salman gloated that his government—in opposing Arafat's decision to renounce terrorism and recognize Israel's right to security—had told the PLO that "Israel would not give them anything." Now, "for all the concessions, they got nothing in return," Salman said. "So the PLO should search for new orientations."

PLO no: For its part, the PLO, which had been willing to consider the Israeli election plan provided it was given a role in the process, now says that it can no longer do so. Saying the phase of discussing elections has ended, Yasser Arafat suggests that it is time to consider an international peace conference at which direct talks between Israel and the PLO can occur. Arafat laid responsibility for Israel's intransigence on the Bush administration. The United States, he said, has encouraged Likud's hard line by its "unconditional" support of Israel, including repeated U.N. Security Council vetoes of resolutions criticizing Israeli treatment of Palestinians. Now, Arafat said, "the ball is in the American court. Is the U.S. willing to carry out President Bush's promise to make peace in the Mideast, or will it capitulate to Israeli hawks and their supporters in Washington?"

It's a good question, and we strongly support the logic behind it. The current Israeli policies can only lead from disaster to catastrophe. The recent incident in which 14 people died when a Palestinian man grabbed the steering wheel of a bus and plunged it into a ravine is only a straw in the wind. This "instinctive reaction of an oppressed man," as one PLO spokesman put it, entailed a series of equally outraged attacks by Israelis on Palestinians. And the outrage and frustration on both sides can only escalate unless the needs of both are addressed by direct talks. Short of that, the ugliness of Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories and the mean-spirited responses on both sides will surely end the dream of a civilized Jewish homeland.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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LETTERS

Tempered

IT WAS GOOD TO SEE DAVID MOBERG'S UAW convention report (*ITT*, July 5) temper some of the excessively harsh and unsubstantiated judgments rendered in his earlier story on "team" production systems in U.S. auto plants (*ITT*, June 7).

That earlier piece read very much like New Directions literature, and it caused considerable consternation among many UAW people who expect Moberg to be incisive and critical but also to report stories carefully.

Observing the convention at close range and speaking to delegates apparently persuaded David that the UAW has not totally gone to hell and that the leadership is sincere about wanting to comprehend and respond to member concerns about new production systems and the "joint" programs with employers.

As UAW President Owen Bieber said to the delegates in Anaheim, we're not interested in acquiescing in any corporate agenda. We'll pursue whatever strategies and tactics will advance a workers' agenda. The challenge, obviously, is determining what that agenda should be in a rapidly changing environment.

It's one thing to debate the issue of *how* to make industries more competitive while protecting workers' interests, but to ignore the reality of a new environment is disastrous. Yet New Directions often campaigned as though worldwide auto competition were a clever fiction invented for the purpose of undermining the UAW. More than anything else, this refusal to acknowledge that the world has changed while blaming everything on the union is what caused New Directions to fizzle. The reckless charge that UAW leaders are "completely in bed" with the corporations only added to the backlash effect among the union's rank and file, who generally believe the leadership is doing a good job under very trying circumstances.

The ferment and discussion engendered in part by New Directions will doubtless continue in the UAW, which is all to the good. But UAW members have shown that they have little patience with back-to-the-future rhetoric or nasty attacks on the integrity of decent, hardworking union leaders.

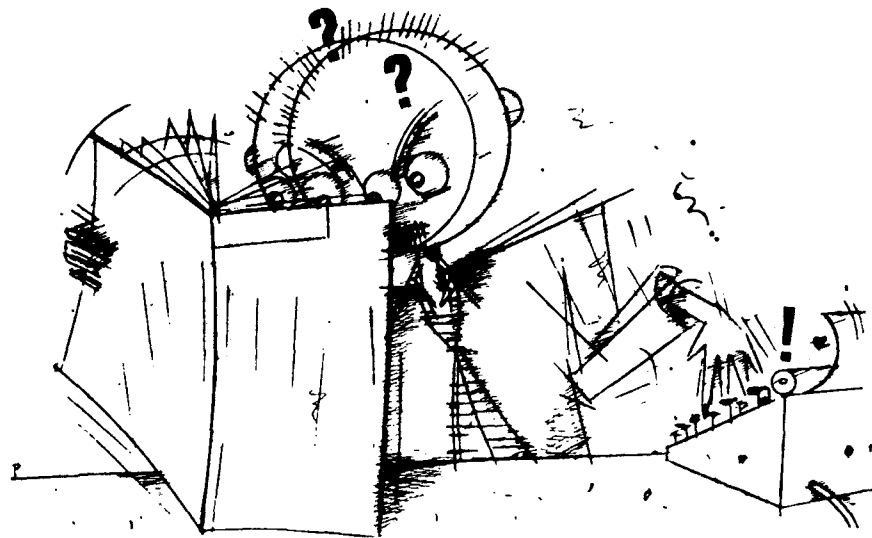
Peter G. Laarman, Director
UAW Public Relations
and Publications

Constructive solution

AFTER HEARING THE SUPREME COURT'S NEW abortion ruling I have the horrible ache of fear in the pit of my stomach. I fear for my daughter, now eight, who may enter her reproductive years in an era of dangerous illegal abortions and violation of privacy rights.

She may have to spend 30 years with the specter of contraceptive failure looming before her, dictating how she acts. I would rather her hopes and dreams guided her. I fear for her if she is driven—as millions of women have been driven—to seek a potentially fatal illegal abortion.

But there may be a silver lining. My daughter already is aware of this issue (she accompanied me to the women's rights march in Washington this spring) and con-



siders herself an active part of the political system. She looks forward to her 18th birthday, when she will be able to vote. Even better, she already is planning to seek elective office as soon as she is eligible.

Her enthusiasm reminds me that the solution to our problem with abortion, as with so many social problems, is simple: women must run for and win every possible state house and congressional seat in the next elections.

N.E. Koltnow
Boone, N.C.

Democracy

IN THE JUNE 21 ISSUE JOHN JUDIS STATES, "THE abiding alternatives are not capitalism and communism, but democratic capitalism and a mature socialism tempered by experiences and inoculated against one-party rule." On the next page, Alisa Joyce states, "The student reformers were not asking for a multiparty democracy. They wanted a multivoiced socialism."

In both statements, socialism is presented as different from, or not including, democracy. While I think this may have been inadvertent and not the intention of the writers, it reflects and perpetuates the capitalist stereotype that it alone is democratic, and that democracy—rather than capitalism—is the opposite of socialism. Democracy—as everyone should know, but apparently it bears much repeating—is the political opposite of totalitarianism and dictatorship. Capitalism and socialism are economic systems (never seen in a "pure" state) that may or may not be democratic. One would expect *In These Times*, of all publications, to be clear about these distinctions.

Ann Morrisett Davidson
Ardmore, PA

Poland's fate

THE INTERVIEW WITH POLISH JOURNALIST Jozef Kusmierek by Alex Amerisov (*ITT*, June 21) presented a misleading picture of the current opinion within the Solidarity opposition. Kusmierek is known in Poland for his incisive, though somewhat quirky, polemics. He has played the gadfly throughout his long and interesting lifetime. During the '40s, he was a member of Communist partisan units. Later, his muckraking journalism got him blacklisted from the official press. Later still, in 1980-81, he wrote for Solidarity papers and was interned under martial law.

In Poland, then, both friends and friendly victims of Kusmierek's barbs would discount remarks such as that Poland's problem is it never had a genuine working class, or his calling Lech Walesa a Maoist obsessed by radical egalitarianism.

Let me mention a few historical facts about the Polish working class in support of its claim to reality. The Revolution of 1905 that almost toppled the Russian Empire began in Poland in 1904 and lasted well into 1907, led by militants of various workers' parties, workers themselves and allied students and peasants. The sit-down strikes in Flint, Mich., in 1936 were called "Polish strikes" after a tactic pioneered by Lodz textile workers. Even in the darkest Stalinist days of the early '50s, Polish Socialist Party (PPS) workers made their presence felt on the factory floor. Not to mention the seismograph of dates—1956, 1970, 1976, 1980, 1988—in which Polish workers dismantled the ideology of "real, existing socialism" as well as its local power apparatus.

Calling Walesa a Maoist leveler is simply bizarre. If anything, he has bent over backward to include a wide array of classes—intellectuals, farmers and, lately, even party officials—in his project of rebuilding Poland. "Populist," even "demagogue," yes;

"Maoist?" no.

Now to the hidden agenda. By interviewing Kusmierek, Amerisov tried to make explicit the question lurking like a bad conscience in *In These Times*' discussion of Eastern Europe: what is happening to socialism? Is it possible to reject Communism and still champion socialist values?

Elsewhere in the same issue, *In These Times*' John Judis answered with a clarification—and social democratic—"yes." Speaking of the state of the U.S. left, Judis urged abandoning both a warmed-over conservatism and a neo-Leninism as response, to the collapse of Communism.

The opposition in Poland is quite allergic to the "S-word," which Solidarity's elected parliamentary deputies succeeded in deleting from their oath of office. But the economic catastrophe facing the country has forced consideration of social democratic protection for the working poor (who are the overwhelming majority) from marketing reform. The PPS has reappeared, along with a youth-led splinter, the PPS-RD (Democratic Revolution).

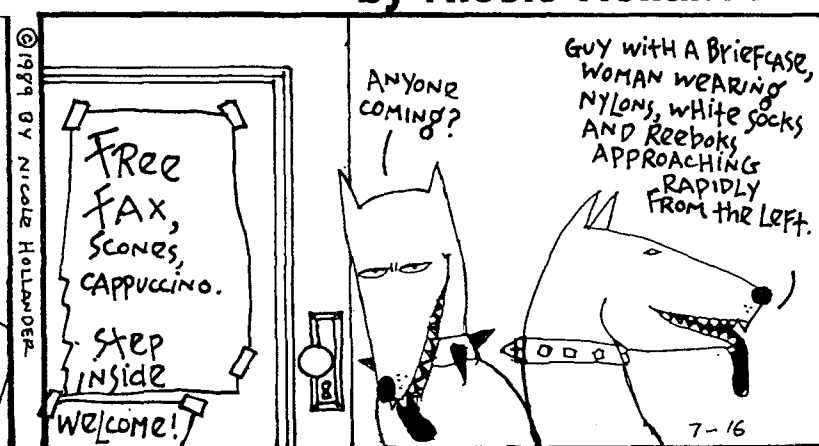
But, in the battle for the form that a post-Communist social order might take, it seems to me that the appearance of socialist parties is less important than the broad sweep of the last several decades in Poland. The primordial conflict between socialism and capitalism consists in opposing views on the relation of individual to society. Socialism means communal responsibility for the survival of each member rather than capitalism's faith that the best society will come (by a "hidden hand") out of each individual's pursuit of private interest.

The Solidarity movement has established the need for civil liberties and democratic procedures, thus discrediting the imposition of socialism by military force and its maintenance by a single-party state. Its success in doing so has been based on the strong commitment toward the survival of the community and, therefore, an explicit rejection of the individualistic "everybody for himself" ethic. From Gdansk 1980 to Gdansk 1988 Solidarity demands took priority over local wages and grievances.

Today, in Solidarity's moment of electoral triumph and amid a staggering foreign debt, the primordial social question returns in full force: will Poland's survival be best pursued by holding on to Solidarity's ethos of mutual responsibility, or by abandoning it for a system of "enrich yourselves" come what may?

Franek Michalski
Contributing Editor
Across Frontiers

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

By Henry Rosemont Jr.

A LISA JOYCE'S RECENT ARTICLES ON China (*ITT*, May 24, June 7, June 21) struck me as knowledgeable, accurate, and sensitive to the idealistic vision that partially motivated the Tiananmen demonstrations from mid-April to the beginning of June. But I believe the articles are one-sided, and when buttressed by the standard media presentations, combine to project a picture of the Chinese conflict that is much too starkly black and white: it was a power struggle pure and simple, pitting bad "conservatives" against fair-to-middling "liberals" within the Politburo, with good students and their worker allies more or less pawns in the game. And the bad guys won.

Such a picture, however inadvertent Joyce's contribution to it, endorses cynicism (all politics is power, moral principles are irrelevant), reinforces old stereotypes (more "oriental despotism"), and is highly misleading (the story may well have had a happy ending if the minimal student demands had been met).

My own picture is more of a montage, and more troubling. After living and working in China from 1982-84, I returned in late May to observe the changes that had taken place in the intervening five years. Even before the tanks moved into the square I did not like much of what I saw.

On the surface there seemed to be much progress. Housing construction is underway everywhere in the city, not just in the foreign section. Many of the temples and

The seething debate beneath China's recent deadly debacle

monasteries have been carefully restored, with monks, lay worshippers and visitors all about. A great multiplicity of goods are for sale, from exotic foods to VCRs—and there are relatively few queues. Hundreds of street vendors hawk their wares from early morning until late in the evening, and the clothing of their customers is varied and colorful.

The underside is rather less heartening. Traveling over 50,000 kilometers during my earlier two-year stay I encountered a total of three beggars: a non-threateningly daft man in the outskirts of Shanghai, and two destitute families in the coal-mining region of Taiyuan. In the week before the army shot its way into the city, however, I saw an average of a dozen beggars a day, several of them young women with babies in their arms. Near the Great Wall, a sun-wizened elderly peasant approached me, hunched over not only from his life of labor, but also apologetically; he didn't want money—only an aluminum can, the contents of which I had just consumed.

During the brief "spiritual pollution" campaign in the autumn of 1983, the government huffed and puffed about the hard-core pornography that was supposedly flooding the country, but neither I nor anyone else I knew had actually seen any. I saw it in abundance in 1989, with cover photos that even the dregs of the American slicks confine to their inside pages.

In 1982, a beginning college instructor—and almost all other government employees—earned about 70 yuan a month, plus free housing. In Beijing in 1989, a beginning college instructor—and almost all other government employees—earned about 70 yuan a month, plus free housing. Yet the price of virtually everything a Chinese wants to buy has at least tripled. Bananas and tomatoes that used to cost 15 Chinese cents now cost 50-60 cents; the price of a well-made bicycle has jumped from 180 to 650 yuan; a bowl of boiled dumplings washed down with a bottle of local beer usually cost less than 2 yuan before, over 5 yuan now. Thanks to the continued devaluation of the Chinese currency, plus the black market demand for foreign exchange certificates, a Chinese worker must now pay 700-plus yuan to purchase a U.S. \$100 foreign item that would have cost only 200 yuan five years earlier. And black market money changers—whom I earlier encountered only in Guilin—now dog your steps everywhere in the tourist and foreign sections of Beijing.

Who, then, is buying all these goods? The numerous entrepreneurs, large and small, among others. Selling almost anything on the open market can net a hustling merchant 100 to 800 yuan profit per week—i.e., anywhere from 5 to 50 times as much money as the average government employee makes without bonuses. Exorbitant though these profits may be, they pale by comparison to those available to a properly placed Party bureaucrat with connections. The multi-pricing policy in effect for the past several years obliges each production unit to sell a fixed amount of its goods to the state at a low price. Any surplus can be

sold to the highest bidder, with profits remaining with the production unit itself. Supposedly these material incentives to increase production were intended for the benefit of all, but the results have often been otherwise: with the right contracts, and a knowledge of how to shuffle the paperwork appropriately, mid- and upper-level Party bureaucrats can buy large quantities of goods—from raw steel to appliance parts—at the state price and resell them for whatever the "market" will bear. Even the government admits openly that profits in the millions of yuan have been made by corrupt officials in this way.

Almost all of these officials are men, but financial opportunities also exist for women, especially if they are young and attractive. It is common knowledge in Beijing that if anyone wants a woman, there are many to choose from. It was not common knowledge before.

Enlightened self-interest: It is thus not surprising that so many workers and low-level government employees showed support for the student demonstrators. Without in any way detracting from their courage, it was altogether in their self-interest for them to do so. Doubling their wages overnight would still leave most non-essentials beyond their economic reach, and perhaps some essentials as well: the truck farming of fruits and vegetables has become so profitable that most peasants do not want to grow grain any longer, with the consequence that China is once again a net importer of grain.

Both sides are troubled by the nature of the current economic reforms.

The students also had a strong personal stake in the demonstrations. Most of them—unless they have connections—continue to be assigned jobs by the state after graduation. A number of these jobs are superfluous or boring and underutilize the knowledge and skills the students have acquired. Worse, a great many students attending urban universities come from the rural areas and are regularly asked to go back there after graduation, especially as school teachers. Life in these outlying provinces is still primitive both culturally and economically compared to the cities, and consequently a large number of these students understandably desire to remain where they have studied.

All of these are legitimate personal concerns, but it is not at all clear what the government should have done about them. Granting large increases to factory workers quickly would only worsen the inflation that has already vitiated the economic reforms and would only increase the growing disparity in the standards of living in China. Moreover, if all university graduates were given the choice of where to live, the cities would soon sink under their weight; it is admitted on all sides that the cities cannot even usefully employ all the intellectuals they have right now. And if the best and

the brightest—educated at state expense—continue to move away permanently from the countryside, who will teach the 800-plus million Chinese who will be living there for the foreseeable future?

Universal concern: Seen in these lights, the conflicts in the Politburo cannot be explained simply as a struggle between power-mad octogenarians and their ostensibly more open-minded opponents. Except for corrupt officials and emergent capitalists, all sides to the disputes—students, workers, Party factions—must be deeply troubled by the current nature, pace and direction of the economic reforms. Further, they all believed that changes had to be undertaken by the Party, because the only likely alternative was civil war, with the probable return of the warlord regionalism that plagued China for the century before liberation.

The disagreements arose over how the Party could best effect changes in the reforms. It appears that the Zhao Zhiyang faction wanted to more vigorously prosecute corrupt bureaucrats, as the students and workers were demanding. Further, by acknowledging the student movement as patriotic, this faction might gamble that the idealism of the students would outweigh their self-interested concerns. And they could equally gamble that by extending freedom of assembly and of the press, corruption, price gouging, greed and exploitation would be more fully exposed, with hoped-for results of an increasingly equitable rises in living standards, a lowering of inflation, more productive investment, and an overall improvement in the quality of Chinese life.

But reasonable and principled though this view surely is, there is an equally reasonable and principled reply, a reply obscured in recent weeks by the shibboleth of "bourgeois liberalism" that has been endlessly shouted by the Deng-Li-Yang faction: what if the gambles lose? Granting the patriotism, moral idealism and bravery of the demonstrators, all of them (and millions more) nevertheless have a strong economic self-interest in the matter, and consequently there must be a distinct possibility that the present untoward situation might simply worsen, leading to a different result: an acceleration of the trend, already visible, of a return to the China of old, with a wealthy minority living well at the expense of a very large and impoverished majority—and an increasingly enfeebled Party and government incapable of reversing the trend.

The debate was brutally terminated in the early morning hours of June 4th. Every morally conscious person must condemn unequivocally the killings and subsequent repression. But outrage at such physical and psychological violence is so easy and straightforward that it is tempting to rest there. I could not have done what the government did, and clearly Alisa Joyce couldn't either. But if pressed about what I might have done instead, I don't believe I could give an adequate answer right now, and I don't believe anyone else can either, for there is precious little black and white in China at this time, only varying shades of dark gray.

Henry Rosemont Jr. is a philosopher at St. Mary's College of Maryland and is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

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By Huang Mei Yuen

China's totalitarianism at the service of multinationals

A MASSACRE IN CHINA HAS BRIEFLY INTERRUPTED our talk of a "global village." Hundreds or thousands of people have been shot down by a "modernizing" government. Within days the bodies were removed (God knows to where), the streets hosed clean and the city returned to "business as usual." On our side of the planet, news from China settles in with a dozen "outdated" catastrophes. Is this a setback from the so-called global village or its realization?

The Chinese government until a short while ago was idolized by its people and second to none in world esteem. It has now joined the Manchus in relation to its people. It is a pariah to those of the world who value humanity and a fool to those who do not.

China's "protest" was a naive act of trust, as when children complain to their parents. The Chinese students were not against their government. Like a kid bragging about his dad, they were eager to prove, "We can protest here just like in America." If the government had understood this, it could have found ways to confirm the students' pride while giving up nothing. Instead it shut the door on their future.

Chinese people feel safe when they hear noise. But when you don't see people shoot-

China's students were protesting to be 'American' in the democratic sense against a government that was increasingly 'American' in the corporate multinational sense.

ing firecrackers or shouting slogans they don't understand, a Chinese government can be in real trouble.

Next time, things will be different. Have you ever tried pushing around a billion people? I remember a pamphlet called *Common Sense* that showed a continent chained to a little island. China will have more trouble.

But what sparked these protests? The Chinese students were protesting to be "American" against a government that had caused wild inflation also by being "American"—"American" not as in "by the people, for the people," but "American" as in AT&T.

Getting it wrong: This is where politicians and news analysts are twisting things backward. They say the current atrocity must be "balanced" with the "positive strides" China has made in "joining the world" by "reforming its economy." But big business has nothing to do with "democracy" or "free enterprise" and is running America into the ground. While George Bush talks down as if hosting "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood," big business continues its game of investing in a repressive society under the guise of helping to reform it. Meanwhile, communism is seen by American commentators as "politically inefficient" in at least one respect: the same people who most directly profit from creating problems might also be directly as-

sociated with the blame.

Communism cannot afford our "democratic process" because there is no separation between government and big business. To allow democracy under communism is to give people direct access to the economy. China's government cannot afford to do that any more than ours can afford to enforce anti-trust laws.

China's "totalitarian government" is now in bed with our "humanitarian corporations." No telling what the resulting bastard will look like. We hear in the popular media about the advanced military defense systems American corporations are selling. We do not hear about the other ways computers can be useful to a police state keeping track of a billion people.

IBM and other American corporations have designed advanced police systems for Argentina and other blatantly oppressive regimes, including programming expressly written to keep track of "political activists." It would seem a surprising change if they were not eager to do the same for China.

When Deng came here he did not wear a Mao jacket, but a preppie suit—like the pig in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* that walks on two legs. The government that suddenly killed its own people is the same one that is chummy with Washington, G.E., and Coca-Cola. Unlike some Americans, that fact somehow does not inspire in me a feeling of smug security.

Nor does anyone here or in China seem to recognize China's most basic problem as an identity crisis. They cannot decide to be capitalist or communist, Chinese or American. Sort of as if the American Revolution was trying to decide between Whig and Tory.

China's unique position demands finding something new, for which no one is less equipped than their bureaucrats and academicians. Just like "conservative" and "liberal" American bureaucrats and intellectuals, they have lost contact with the spirit of their culture—in China's case, the farmer. "Where the farmer goes, the country goes."

American is the oldest living democracy, and that means a lot. Experience counts. We now know better than to shoot bystanders and students because it backfired at My Lai and Kent State. But China is the oldest civilization, and that means something, too. The keys to this civilization are locked inside the Chinese peasant. Only "the poet"—a Dante or Tu Fu—can pull this spirit out. As it took the impractical Tom Paine to awaken America.

Try getting Deng or Alexander Haig to understand that. No one is more inventive than governments when it comes to war, or less inspired in preserving a lasting society.

China's faults are partly because they are the oldest pioneers for what all human beings are trying to be. We and they have to respect, learn from and cope with that ancient reality. The Great Wall of China is the only human structure visible from space. It was started during the rise of Greek civilization and unified about the time of Christ. Like the shell of a turtle, it seems to have grown organically from the soil of Chinese

regime, but the entire country may have no future.

Deng ordered the massacre saying, "In China, even 1 million people can be considered a small sum." This ranks with Oppenheimer saying, "I see people as numbers." Or a president who "never slept better in his life."

Deng is even less *compos mentis* than King George. People are not computers. Only five were killed in the Boston Massacre. Only 90,000 began the Long March. Less than half survived. China did not become what it is today because a million Chinese mean nothing. But because you cannot destroy China until you have killed every one.

The Chinese students were looking over their shoulders at America. They missed the real point. But this does not lessen its significance. There were more than 1 million in Tiananmen Square. Every university, every village, every family and every farmer in every rice paddy was represented. There were those of the Long March who were shot down one by one as they dangled by their hands to gain the last bridge. There was everyone buried in the Great Wall and under every emperor, and during the three kingdoms. There was every poet and brush stroke. Like those buried in the Great Wall, the story of China has not been told, but is an epic, grimly locked inside its people. "Not marble, nor all the gilded monuments of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme." Least of all a government proven mentally deficient.

Huang Mei Yuen is a Chinese New Englander.

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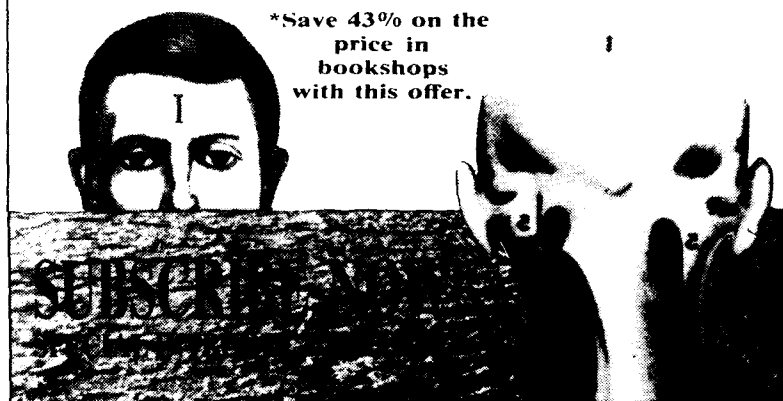
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By Stephanie Brown

WHEN I CLIMBED OUT OF THE shower, I looked into the bathroom mirror over the sink and saw that my nipples had grown to the size of silver dollars and darkened to a deep, bronzy brown. I had to face it: I was pregnant.

I had refused to acknowledge the possibility up until then—eleven days past the due date of my always-regular period—not only because a pregnancy at this moment in my life was simply unthinkable, but also because my husband and I had tried for eight months to conceive our last child and had succeeded, at last, only through use of an ovulation thermometer. *This* pregnancy was the result of one drunken collision in the dark with a near stranger.

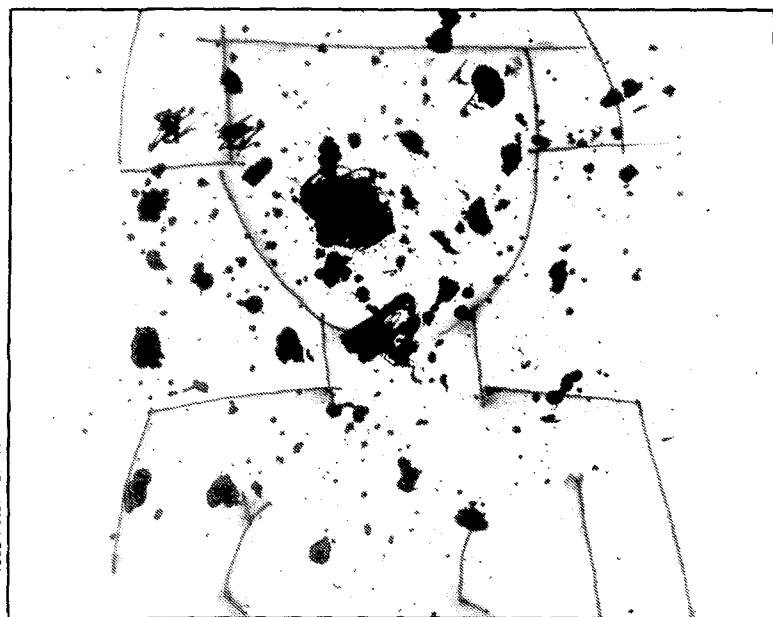
Only two months before I had left my husband back in New York and taken our son and daughter, aged six and three, to live in Sausalito, California. I chose Sausalito partly because my mother was living there, but mainly because it was three thousand miles away.

I had sworn off men forever upon my arrival in sensual, blossom-filled Marin County in February 1964. But it wasn't long before all the eligible (and non-eligible) men in the neighborhood were sniffing around my door like stray dogs after a poodle.

A date with disaster: I never really intended to sleep with Tom. He was a starchy Englishman who made his living as a stock transfer agent. We were ill-suited to one another on every level. He was tidy, no-nonsense and a 55-miles-per-hour-in-the-middle-of-the-road conformist. I was his diametric opposite. But he was kind, always showed up for a date looking polished and took me to charming places—so I saw him once in a while.

We had been dating about a month when he finally convinced me to see his apartment on Russian Hill in San Francisco. I had drunk too much fine vintage wine, the view from Russian Hill was all twinkle and romance and Tom insisted that I'd had my period only last week—he thought that he had felt my sanitary belt while dancing with me (though a small voice in the back of my head, kept trying to shout through the fog not to believe him). At any rate I decided, What the Hell.

Now, I was faced with an absolutely impossible situation. I had no money. My strait-laced father was temporarily supporting me and the kids, and I certainly couldn't ask him for abortion money. I was still looking for a job. Abortion was illegal in those days, and, even if I could find a safe abortionist, it would cost several months' rent. Of course, I couldn't *have* the baby. Caring for my two existing children was already a desperate burden, and who knew to what extremes (hiring detectives?



Illegal abortion: a blast from the past

kidnapping?) my husband might be driven if he learned of my "unfaithfulness."

I tried to shove the whole problem out of my mind. Maybe I'm not pregnant, maybe something else (a tumor, I hope?) is delaying my period, maybe...

Early pregnancy tests had not yet been invented. I went to a local clinic and took a urine test. After an interminable three-day wait for the results, the doctor told me that something went wrong with the test and he couldn't be sure. Meanwhile, I was beginning to panic. I knew that it was essential to have an abortion within the first couple of months, otherwise nobody would do it for me.

I told the doctor that it was urgent for me to know right away because I *simply couldn't* have a baby right now. He cut me off in mid-sentence and told me, "I don't want to know about it. If you do anything and you get into trouble, you can come to me for help afterwards."

Swell.

So as he had suggested, I took birth control pills for five days and then stopped for three days. If my period did not begin, I could conclude that I was pregnant.

My period did not begin.

I confided to Ida, a new friend I had met in Sausalito, about the mess I was in. She, surprisingly, had an answer.

No choice: She had lived through two abortions herself. They were "natural" abortions done by a black midwife who lived nearby in Berkeley. And they were cheap: only \$150. For me to come up with that much money without betraying myself to my family I'd have to starve myself, go nowhere and buy nothing for more than a month. But I had no choice. So my friend made an appointment with her "Mrs. Jones" and drove me over to Berkeley the next

day, as soon as her own husband left for work.

I was nauseated and shivering with fear and morning sickness as we crossed the bridge from San Francisco to Berkeley. We drove to an older section of town where blacks lived in slightly shabby row houses. People looked at us curiously as we climbed the front steps of Mrs. Jones' house and rang the bell.

A very pregnant teenager opened the door and stared at us with vague, glazed-over eyes.

"Some peoples is here, Ma!" she announced.

Her mother, a plump woman in a torn print housedress and an apron, came to the door, drying her hands, and greeted us. She sized me up.

"She look fine to me," she told my friend. "Nice healthy girl."

Mrs. Jones had Ida wait in the living room while she led me into the bedroom. Pictures of Jesus and little

A time so long ago that it's almost tomorrow.

plaques with legends like "Souvenir of Marine World, Florida" adorned the walls. Newspapers had been fanned out on the bedspread.

"Just take off your panties and lie down, darlin'," my obstetrician told me.

I did it.

She went into the other room and came back with a long, red tube. Later my friend explained that this was a surgical catheter with one end sealed.

By any means necessary: The catheter was supposed to be inserted into my womb, and a few hours later the presence of this foreign body would cause me to abort naturally. I

would "have" the baby.

I opened my legs, and Mrs. Jones went to work. She sweated and grunted. She couldn't seem to find my cervix, where the tube needed to be inserted. I felt no pain. At last she said that the tube was in place, that I should go home and wait.

ABORTION

I gave her my \$150.

Ida took me home. I paid off the baby-sitter, gave my kids supper, and waited. Nothing happened. I read a few chapters in a paperback. Nothing happened.

So I called Ida. She said it had been too long, maybe we'd have to go back to Mrs. Jones, but that she would almost certainly want more money.

I hung up the phone and went into the bathroom to check the tube. It had fallen out.

I thought it over. I now had the tube. I knew where my cervix was better than Mrs. Jones. I, moreover, understood the value of sterilization and the danger of infection. *And, most important of all, I cared whether or not I survived this damned procedure.* I decided to do it myself.

As soon as the kids were in bed, I wrote out a "will." I had been looking at my children all evening as though for the last time. I loved them so helplessly. I couldn't bear the thought of leaving them.

But my life would be over if I had this baby as surely as if I bled to death on my mattress this night, wounded by my own folly.

I wrote out a simple document asking that, in case of my death, my children be taken to my husband. I had nothing else of value to bequeath.

Coming to a boil: Then I went into the kitchen and put a big kettle of water on to boil. I took some picture wire from the kitchen drawer (wire would be needed to stiffen the catheter). I boiled the catheter and the wire for half an hour and took them, still in the kettle, into the bathroom to cool. Then I washed the toilet seat, my thighs, arms and hands with liquid Phisohex soap (an anti-bacterial hexachlorophene, which I routinely used to clear up my complexion).

I sat down on the toilet seat and threaded the wire into the tube. Then I put my feet up, one on the towel rack and one on the sink, and leaned back. I reached a finger up, my vaginal canal and found my cervix. Then I took a deep breath, thought how I wished this baby had been my husband's and mine, back in the good times, and started the end of the tube into my cervix. It didn't feel like much, rather like having a Pap smear. I carefully withdrew the wire as I inserted the tube further and further, never al-

lowing the wire inside my uterus, where anything that rigid might cause a fatal puncture.

The tube seemed miles long, but finally it was all, except for a short tail I left dangling, inside me. I optimistically put on a sanitary napkin.

I went into the bedroom and called Ida. I told her I had done it myself and that if she didn't hear from me by 9:00 a.m. she should call an ambulance.

Then I laid the will on the pillow next to me and went to sleep.

I awoke early the next morning with cramps. I smiled to realize that I was, so far, okay—no fever, no hemorrhaging.

I went into the bathroom and found that bleeding had started. I slowly removed the tube.

I called Ida, and she almost collapsed with relief.

Moving on: As it happened, I had to prepare to move into a different apartment that day. My lease on the old one was up, and there was just no choice but to walk around, pack, and keep the kids busy and out of the way.

The bleeding was heavy now, and unusually large clots were coming through. I wondered which of them was my baby. I felt a bit light-headed but kept going. *Might as well let it all come out.* I thought.

The next day was moving day. The movers were miraculous and wafted every last thing from one place to the other in two hours. Lucky that they did, because my bleeding had become so heavy that some blood spilled over the side of my napkin and fell on the floor right in front of the movers, an unforgettable experience. I gave them a check, put the kids in front of the TV and went straight to bed.

The doctor at the clinic had promised to help me. I called and told him what had happened. He was reassuring and ordered me to place an ice pack on my abdomen and to *absolutely* stay off my feet.

The bleeding subsided, and I recuperated without event. Not three weeks after the abortion my husband and I were reconciled, and I returned to New York. Twenty-five years later, we are still married.

For years after that I hung onto my precious red catheter. Catheters were hard to come by then, as surgical supply houses knew that midwives and registered nurses were using them to perform illegal abortions.

I hid mine under the lingerie in my top drawer until abortion was legalized on January 22, 1973. Then, glad to be rid of the thing I had so both hated and needed, I took it out to the incinerator of our apartment building hallway and burned it.

Stephanie Brown is the pseudonym of a widely published writer who lives in New York.

Songs From the Alley

By Kathleen Hirsch
Ticknor & Fields,
420 pp., \$22.95

By Laura Fraser

THE HOMELESS ARE MOST OFTEN referred to as a problem, not as people. We realize vaguely that they are the refuse of the Reagan years, and we think someone should do something about them to get them off the sidewalks and out of our vision. Rarely do we stop to wonder why a particular woman ended up panhandling and much less do we stop to talk to her.

Kathleen Hirsch, a writing teacher and staff writer for the *Boston Phoenix*, spent three years in the company of homeless women, as a volunteer at Boston's Pine Street Inn shelter. She became intimately involved in the lives of the women there, and reported on her findings without attempting to live the life of a homeless woman, which she says she regards "more as a guise than an enlightening research tool." In *Songs From the Alley* she tells the stories of two of the women she met, whom she calls Amanda and Wendy, tracing their histories back to their childhood homes.

It was in those homes, Hirsch points out, where homelessness began. Like any good reporter, she details the evolution of economic factors that contribute to homelessness—the lack of affordable housing, daycare, and reasonable wages for women. But her narrative portraits illustrate why some women become homeless while others make do. What almost all homeless women have in common, she finds, is a history of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. They have low personal expectations, and as adults, repeat the abusive relationships of their childhoods

Homeless women wander the back alleys of abuse

and finally look for some solace in a bottle, alone, huddled over a heating vent.

Culture of disconnection: Both Amanda and Wendy are white women in their 30s, and both came from abusive homes. Amanda's parents were artists who moved to the suburbs and had children because that seemed like the thing to do in the late '50s, although they lived a

HOMELESS

life of isolation, resenting their situation and neighbors. ("The suburbs," Hirsch reflects, "were creating the preconditions for homelessness as actively as were financially strapped sections of the inner city. Almost everywhere, Americans were evolving a culture of disconnection and estrangement, the groundwork for a culture of homelessness.")

Amanda's parents gave her scant attention, and Amanda grew withdrawn, singled out and teased at school for being strange. Her father started drinking to cope with his alien world, and her mother retreated into herself. When Amanda's father started beating her, her mother simply stood by.

Wendy came from a poor family; her mother made the living for the family and took care of Wendy, while her father abused and cheated on her mother, and finally left her. Her mother transferred her bitterness to Wendy, burning her with an iron in her crib as an infant. At the age of five, Wendy was raped by her new stepfather; when she was older, she was raped by her

brothers as well. She internalized the abuse as self-hatred, and acted it out in turns by being bulimic, trying to overdose on aspirin, getting pregnant and getting drunk. Later, alcohol, along with relationships with abusive men, proved to be the most potent of her poisons.

Hirsch's chronicle sheds light on how the shelter system each woman encountered served to further weaken her fragile self-esteem. For Wendy, the shelters—which eventually refused to admit her because of her alcoholism—and the alcoholic detox programs did nothing to help her find what she needed, someone to love her. Her only shred of self-worth came from her knowledge that she could survive on the streets, survive batterings and be "a fugitive from every system that had ever held her." There were winter nights when she was kept alive by people who understood that homeless people don't want to be in shelters, who passed out sandwiches and coffee and blankets from a roving rescue van. By the end of the book, Wendy, having recently miscarried in an alley, seems to be in such a spiral of self-destruction that one wonders whether she has died on the streets by now.

Beyond housing: Amanda was luckier. She was able to pull herself out of the shelters in spite of the system, thanks to some of the special women who worked there. Amanda happened to strike up a relationship with an overworked counselor who helped her regain some of her self-esteem so she could feel sure enough of herself to

move away from the shelter into supported housing. It would take her months of support before she could become independent. The women who worked in the shelter understood that, Hirsch relates, and unlike many homeless advocates realized that homelessness is more complicated than simply not having an affordable home. "To the contrary, they believe that a lot of the women they see simply can't make it on their own."

What Hirsch makes clear is that homeless women, being women, have a much rougher time out on the streets than homeless men. They are vulnerable, abused and scared. Hirsch also shows how a paternalistic shelter system, and its sister social services and addiction programs, can do little to improve

Songs From the Alley is a real feat of human reporting and a must for anyone who ever gets asked for spare change.

these women's self-esteem and situations. What they need, beyond affordable housing, daycare and other economic boosts, is a community where individual supportive solutions can be worked out, where they can begin to feel safe enough to help themselves.

Interspersed in Hirsch's poignant narrative about Amanda and Wendy

are chapters about the 200-year history of homelessness and social services in Boston, from Jane Addams to Michael Dukakis, which describe how institutions for the poor have had to persist because they've created a dependent social service industry. But these analyses seem dry and out of place sandwiched between the more narrative chapters. Hirsch's conclusion, too, reads more like a policy statement than a story. Yet her conclusions are important, calling for homeless programs more intricately tied to communities, with day-round individualized support services, as well as for the obvious needs for more affordable housing, supported housing, better addiction programs and child care.

Hirsch, however, doesn't push beyond the idea of reforming service agencies and existing policies. Her suggestions for bolstering self-esteem come from individualized treatment programs, rather than from community-building among the homeless. Given the fact that homelessness becomes more and more a permanent situation for more and more people, it seems she might have considered homeless unions and organizations as an effective tool both for increasing self-esteem and for creating social change.

Nevertheless, Hirsch's book is a real feat of human reporting, and important reading for anyone who ever gets asked for spare change. The stories of Amanda and Wendy, in their increasingly fragmented communities and violent homes, are stories that are familiar to some degree, to almost everyone. As Hirsch put it, "Their homelessness was not an aberration of the American experience, but its inevitable and logical consequence."

Laura Fraser has written extensively on homelessness for the *East Bay Express*, Pacific News Service and the San Francisco Examiner's *Image* magazine.

Taking on General Motors: A Case Study of the UAW Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open

By Eric Mann
U.C.L.A. Institute
of Industrial Relations
408 pp., \$20.00

By Clancy Sigal

AERICAN LABOR UNIONS RARELY get it right these days. They're losing members hand over fist, strategically on the defensive, tactically confused, and as demoralized as some of the fading "sunset" industries where their roots are deepest. Unquestionably, there is a death wish in the union movement that refuses even to organize the unorganized to ensure its own survival.

But out in California, at the General Motors plant in Van Nuys, the United Automobile Workers

What's good for Local 645 is good for America, too

labor breaks through the fog of its own numbly pessimistic depression. Threatened with closure of its showed what can be done when Camaro-making plant and the loss of thousands of jobs, UAW local 645, at least half Chicano and Black,

LABOR

fought back brilliantly, with a verve and shrewd imaginativeness we haven't seen since the '30s sit-downs. GM, notorious for its faceless bureaucratic style of management, has been forced to suspend the closure—and almost as importantly, to deal with its own employees as human beings capable of autonomous action.

Eric Mann's "case study"—he's a Local 645 line worker and union activist—of how the union took on GM and fought it to a standstill, without strikes or violence, is an extraordinary drama. And quite possibly, as Mann claims, a "model of resistance" for similarly threatened plants. His book beats many TV miniseries for pace, color and excitement if you're at all sympathetic to the subject. And it's a real must for labor men and women tired of the usual dreary round of honorable defeats, sad agenda items and narrow-focus sterility so common of unions today.

Two crucial points emerge from Mann's fast-reading account. One is the way the union found to reach

out to the broader community, including the churches and Chamber of Commerce, for support of its potential boycott of GM products. The other is how, despite faction fights and racial tensions, ordinary union members were brought into the process and induced to keep their commitment over an unusually long haul—five years to date.

For me, also, Mann's study is confirmation of my sense that U.S. unions can be the backbone of our democracy if only, for a change, they practice democracy within their own ranks. From the start Local 645 ran an open-minded campaign, self-analytical, self-critical and constantly ready to change tactics. Realizing their own limitations and unwilling to be provoked to strike action, the union's Community Action Program had essentially only one demand: that GM temper its appetite for profits (Van Nuys was a profitable plant) in the in-

terests of the whole locality. "The goal," Mann says, "was to force GM to maintain a profit level lower than it might want" to avoid a farm worker-style boycott in vulnerable LA, the USA's No. 1 car market. The real bottom line was good old-fashioned class struggle adapted to the '80s, when knee-jerk militance doesn't work anymore but outreach does.

Mann's book has a swing and bite to it that is rare in industrial relations. With their backs to the wall, American unions may yet find new strategies, new directions, to bring them back into the optimistic mainstream.

Taking on General Motors is available from Labor Distributors, 6454 Van Nuys Blvd., Suite 150, Van Nuys, CA 91401. Price: \$20 (California residents add \$1.30).

Clancy Sigal, author of *Going Away* and *Zone of the Interior*, is at work on a new novel.

IN THE ARTS

P.O.V. documentaries are just a point of departure

P.O.V.
PBS

By Pat Aufderheide

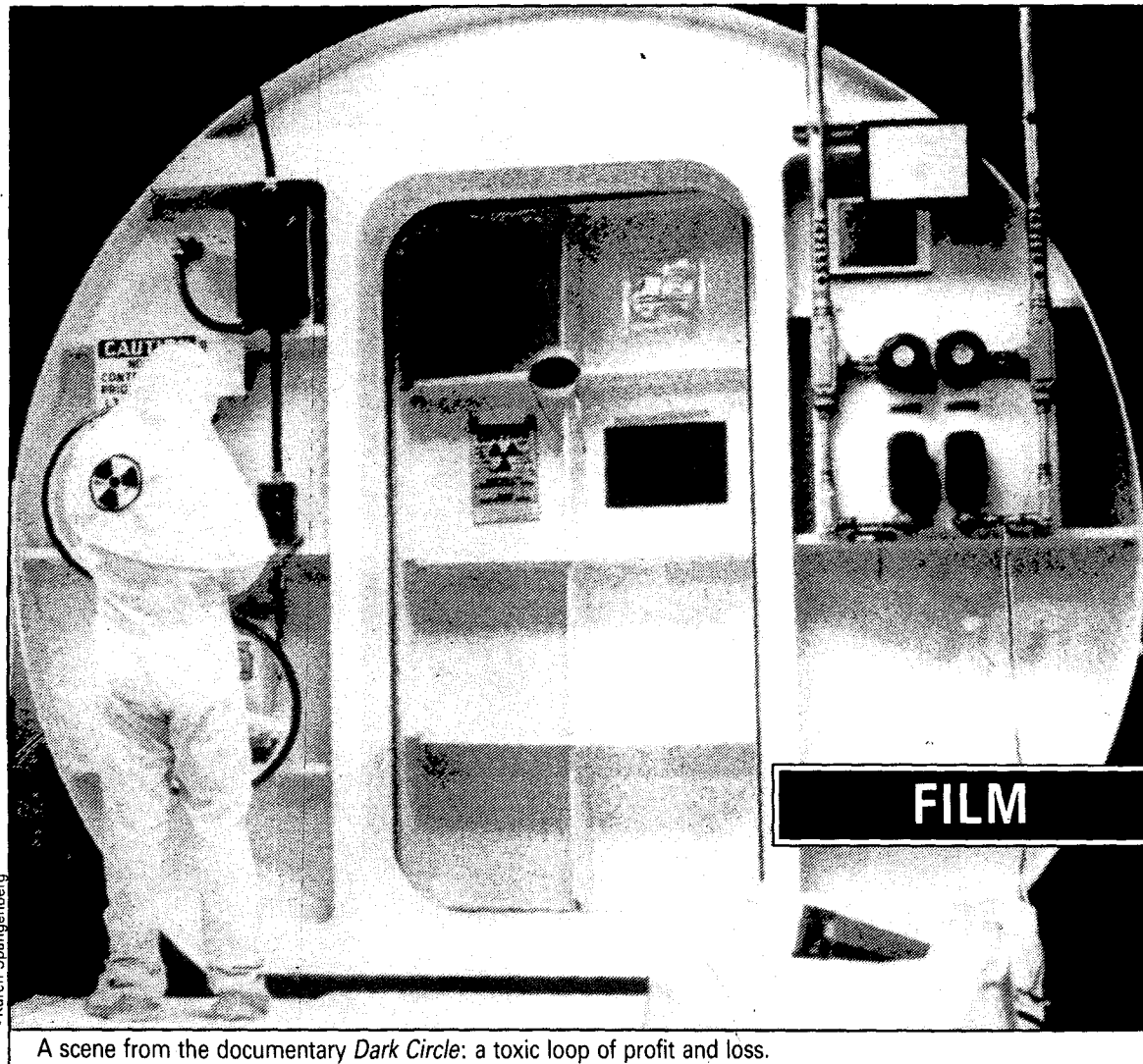
AN FBI INVESTIGATION OF SAFETY violations at the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant has recently resulted in charges that the plant released toxic chemicals into Denver drinking water. The Department of Energy is charged with concealing violations and faking documents.

And it looks like Rocky Flats is just one of several cover-ups at government nuclear facilities.

The FBI should have been going to the movies.

Back in 1982, people who watched *Dark Circle*, a moving documentary by Judy Irving, Chris Beaver and Ruth Landy, already knew much of what the FBI has just uncovered. And they learned something else: the names and faces and fates of people who live with—and sometimes die from—nuclear pollution. They learned that the nuclear danger is not only a future threat but also a present reality.

A second look: Now, finally, those who didn't see the film in theaters or on cable will be able to see it through the independent documentary series *P.O.V.* (for "point of view") on public TV. The film will be aired August 8 in most



A scene from the documentary *Dark Circle*: a toxic loop of profit and loss.

cities (but call your local PBS station).

Filmmaker Chris Beaver is delighted to see his film surface on

public TV after seven long years, and to see the FBI's confirmations of the film's revelations. But he can't forget the "horror stories" he heard from residents of Rocky Flats back in 1982, some of whom have since died. "Maybe the FBI will lift this veil of secrecy from Rocky Flats," he said, "but the facts have been available for years. Those people suffered needlessly."

P.O.V., now in its second season, showcases the work of some of America's most tenacious film artists: independent documentarians. They insist that reality can be as fascinating as fantasy, and sometimes they prove it. They're usually rewarded for their efforts with suspicion from those who don't want to rock the boat and by pained impatience from those who fear (usually correctly) that documentaries don't draw the audiences that fantasy does.

P.O.V. is a good place to sample the notion that good documentaries are those with strong opinions, presented with enough bite to generate both emotional heat and rational light. The opening film of the series, which aired July 18, is a top-flight introduction.

Who Killed Vincent Chin? by Christine Choy and Renee Tajima, explores racism in America. (Unlike many independent documentaries, it received production funds from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and also got help from the Detroit public TV station). The 1988 film concerns the 1982 beating death of

a Chinese-American Detroit auto-worker, framing the controversial murder within autoworkers' culture, the separate experience of Asian-Americans in the industry and the town and careless media coverage prone to easy answers. The filmmakers' extended interviews with the man who beat Chin to death with a baseball bat, combined with the film's sophisticated editing, turn the question disturbingly toward the viewer.

The best and the rest: Also watch for *Partisans of Vilna* (August 29), directed by Josh Waletzky and produced by Aviva Kempner. In its first-person retelling of the Jewish underground resistance movement against the Nazis in a Polish town, it compellingly mixes horror and

Reality can be as fascinating as fantasy.

heroism. And if you missed Ira Wohl's poignant *Best Boy* last year, about the choices of an aged couple who must plan for their retarded son's life after their deaths, you'll want to catch it this time (September 12). (It's the season's only repeat.)

The 11-week series runs through late September (a fall special will cap the season on November 15). The series features films that celebrate offbeat, unsung and simply curious features of American life. Launched

last year by producer Marc Weiss, the series is still struggling for acceptance. The good news is that, as an anthology series, it eases the pain of programmers who don't know what to do with just one documentary, or who are afraid it won't draw an audience. Its tidy packaging—bite-sized interviews with the filmmakers and a short introduction—situate the films for viewers unfamiliar with documentary.

But the arrival of *P.O.V.* on public TV is not necessarily a signal of growth in alternative voices. It can tempt audiences with unfamiliar tastes, visions and viewpoints—and possibly create an audience for more such work. But it can't fund work; it only picks up films that a producer has already scabbled up the spare change to make.

And that fact, among others, puts the future of *P.O.V.* in doubt. Recent years have been difficult for independent film- and videomakers, despite the proliferation of new video outlets. Funds both from government agencies and private sources have been shrinking—especially for controversial subjects.

Too many masters: Public TV seems the perfect place for important but controversial or non-commercial ventures. But public TV, in its search for upbeat programs to lure wider audiences and potential subscribers, has been notoriously Scrooge-like with independent production funds. The independent production service that Congress mandated last year still has yet to come into existence, mostly due to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's foot-dragging.

Public TV has been particularly leery of alienating its funding bases, which include government, corporations, foundations and subscribers. PBS refused to run *Dark Circle* in 1986, claiming it would have to air a response. When Weiss suggested the program this time around, says PBS' Gail Christian, "the program was just re-evaluated. It was a close call the first time." The fact that *P.O.V.* packaging justified it as a point-of-view documentary, she said, made a big difference.

But if we're going to get more shows like those on *P.O.V.*, we'll need more than a roundup series—fine as it may be. The much-valued video revolution on cassette and cable operates on the same commercial premises that serve to marginalize point-of-view documentary in the first place. Public TV is the only television institution whose mandate includes fostering the feisty and the controversial. As a result, public TV requires protected funding and a revival of its non-commercial mandate. ■

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Eligibles



Tall, dark, attractive, free-spirited Female seeks tired, poor wretched refuse and homeless, tempest-tossed huddled masses for a romantic adventure.



By Paul Gerard

Giant step for a minimalist

DEMONSTRATING AGAIN THAT art follows life and politics, the contemporary classical music world of the '80s was a conservative place. Dominated by works with tuneful melodies and traditional harmonies, the Reagan years saw the return of the orchestra to a prominent place in new music, as composers like John Adams and David Del Tredici wrote lush works that pleased patrons used to Brahms and Beethoven.

Even composers like Steve Reich—the founding father of minimalism, who spent his early career writing spare, conceptual works like *Music for Pieces of Wood*—turned in the '80s to large-scale symphonic statements.

Today, however, Reich is changing his style. Admitting that his symphonic works of recent years belong as much to the decade's conservative sensibility as to his own, he's creating music that is less consciously traditional—music that instead seeks its own form. His latest composition, *Different Trains*, is the first step of a new phase for Reich.

Minimalism to maximalism: The progression to symphonic works was logical for Reich. An early pioneer of minimalism along with Philip Glass and La Monte Young, his rhythmically intricate music grew as he sought new textures and colors through larger ensembles. Early duets in the late '60s gave way to quartets (*Four Organs*, 1970) and sextets (*Six Pianos*, 1973) and finally to Steve Reich & Musicians, the large ensemble that thrust him into the national spotlight in the late '70s.

His first orchestra commission came in 1979, and given the difficulty of touring with a large ensemble, the orchestra became a convenient and rewarding vehicle for his work. But today Reich is turning down orchestra commissions and calling orchestras "museums." He's not content to be a member of the museum staff.

"The '80s were Ronald Reagan," Reich explains from his home outside New York City. "The '80s were New Romanticism. The '80s were the rise of people like John Adams, who I respect enormously, but who's a very old-fashioned composer. It was an extremely conservative time, and I went through a very conservative period that did me a lot of good in certain ways. But I wasn't born to write for the orchestra."

"I leave that period thinking that *The Desert Music* (1984), *Tehillim* (1981) and *Four Sections* (1987) are important, marvelous pieces," he continues. "But now it's time to get on to work that I think is more essentially my own."

Reich's output of the '80s was anything but old-fashioned, but it did progress to a point where it seemed compromised. *Tehillim*, a choral piece inspired by Eastern biblical chants, is a brilliant work, the most ebullient music written in the last



Steve Reich, founding father of minimalism, finds a new track with *Different Trains*

few decades. *The Desert Music*, however, aspires to something beyond the reach of Reich's style. With its huge scale (it's scored for 89 instruments and a chorus of 27), it seems

MUSIC

more an attempt to mimic a 19th-century masterpiece than a true expression of Reich's sensibility.

***Different Trains* contrasts Reich's childhood cross-country trips in the early '40s with the train rides taken by Jews to the death camps.**

Sampling history: What makes *Different Trains* thoroughly modern (or postmodern, if you will) is its use of digital sampling. Unlike Philip Glass, Reich has never been attracted to electronic instruments like synthesizers that create artificial sound. But digital sampling lets you record natural sound and alter the pitch electronically. For example, one could record a single dog bark and then "play" it, making it sound like a dog was singing "Jingle Bells."

For Reich, though, digital sampling is more than a gimmick. It allows him to bring the human voice back into his music.

Different Trains contrasts his childhood cross-country train trips in the early '40s (his divorced parents had divided custody) with the train rides to the death camps taken by European Jews around the same time. Reich recorded recollections of his governess, Pullman porters who rode the same trains and Holocaust survivors. Reich then chose several short excerpts for their distinct pitch and rhythm. The

melodies of these fragments form the musical themes.

From each fragment Reich builds a steady, chugging rhythmic base in the strings (the quartet is overdubbed twice, making a total of 12 parts). The base is punctuated by voices and recorded train whistles, but everything is rigorously musical. Usually the strings play in unison with the recorded voices and then expand the riff and toss it around the instruments, forming an intricately syncopated melody. The whistles build tension (Reich alters their pitch to fit the harmonic structure) and propel the music with the force of a Wagnerian horn chorus. It's a riveting piece of music.

Voicing doubts: What really opens doors for Reich is digital sampling's ability to bring the human voice into music without the artificiality of singing. Two of Reich's earliest pieces, *Come Out* and *It's Gonna Rain* were concerned with natural rhythms of the voice. Short speech fragments were recorded on a number of tape loops, and the

loops were run at slightly different speeds, making the words reverberate against each other as they became further out of phase. Some of his other works use the voice abstractly, without words. But Reich has often talked about the frustration of setting words to music and has only set English text once, in *Desert Music*.

"If orchestras play museum pieces, then the opera is a doddering museum piece," Reich says. "To see people writing opera today without questioning what kind of voices they use seems very superficial. What I learned from Kurt Weill, for instance, is that you don't need an orchestra or a bel canto voice or a Wagnerian heldentenor. Maybe you need voices that are more like the voices we heard on the street."

"In today's opera you see some tenor saying I'm Mahatma Ghandi or Richard Nixon," he continues, pointedly referring to Glass' *Satyagraha* and Adams' *Nixon in China*, respectively. "But they're not. If Richard Nixon sang he'd sound like Frank Sinatra. In *Different Trains*, it's not some soprano singing the part of the governess. It's really Virginia. I'm not setting text; I'm setting human beings."

Theater of the word: With words back in his compositional palette, Reich will also be able to bring more of the world into his music. Known primarily as a creator of abstract works, Reich's use of sampling has piqued a long-dormant interest in music theater. He is currently working with video artist Beryl Korot on *The Cave*, a theater piece that will explore the roots of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

As in *Different Trains*, Reich will base the music of *The Cave* on recorded voices. The multimedia piece will incorporate text from the Koran and the Bible, as well as interviews with, as Reich puts it, "scholars, historians, soldiers, students, secular types, religious types, the works."

The title refers to the burial place of Abraham, which today lies under several layers of monuments to different civilizations: a wall built by Herod, a Byzantine church, a synagogue, a 12th-century mosque. "The cave, the primitive source of the man who in a sense is the source of all three religions is, in some sense, blocked and inaccessible," explains Reich. "That's the dominant metaphor of the piece."

Of course, moving from the abstract to the real world involves new challenges. Reich is now planning a trip to the site of the cave to conduct interviews and shoot some of the video footage. "The site also happens to be in the West Bank, one of the most dangerous places on earth," he says offhandedly.

And that's about as far from a comfortable concert hall seat as you can get.

Paul Gerard is a freelance music critic living in Milwaukee.

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10 Years

Continued from page 13

editor Chamorro rejects any immediate need for a restructuring of the party to make its presently non-elected National Directorate headed by Ortega more accountable to the rank and file.

"I'm not convinced that having a politburo chosen by a central committee makes a political party function more democratically," he says, insisting that the Sandinista Front gets adequate input both from within its ranks and from the society at large. Chamorro says the FSLN leadership has a good grasp on the sentiments of the people.

After 10 years in power, this argument is certainly debatable. Dissidents such as Hassan—and many other longtime observers—feel that the Sandinista leadership is out of touch with the people and even risks overconfidence as the country gears up for next

year's elections.

On the other hand, continuing U.S. hostility may inhibit the potential for change. Democratizing the vanguard opens the door to possible splits in the ruling party—splits that Washington can exploit. Reform of the ruling party may well be the revolution's thorniest long-term problem.

The way ahead: As the revolution enters its second decade, two basic roads seem possible for the future. One is via the cooperative movement, reformed popular organizations such as the defense committees and a revitalized Sandinista Front itself. In the words of Nicaraguan sociologist Orlando Nunez, the direction involves "transitioning from state socialism to a 'communitarian' socialism," one which promotes "generalized self-management by the popular classes in all spheres of social, economic and cultural life."

A darker, problem-ridden path is the one

that relies on foreign capital as the engine of reconstruction and maintains centralization of authority. To woo foreign capital the Sandinistas may try to promote a social-democratic image while traveling down a road resembling the Mexican Revolution, post-1940. Such a path would entail unequal, dependent development and populist, one-party rule.

Given the geopolitical and economic realities, such as the desperate need for investment capital, this latter road may be Nicaragua's more likely fate. It would not be a necessarily democratic outcome, nor the one for which the Sandinista revolution was fought. But in the end, it may be the only thing the Sandinistas can achieve, as the Nicaraguan people continue to struggle for a better life.

William Gasperini and David Dye write regularly for *In These Times* on Nicaragua.

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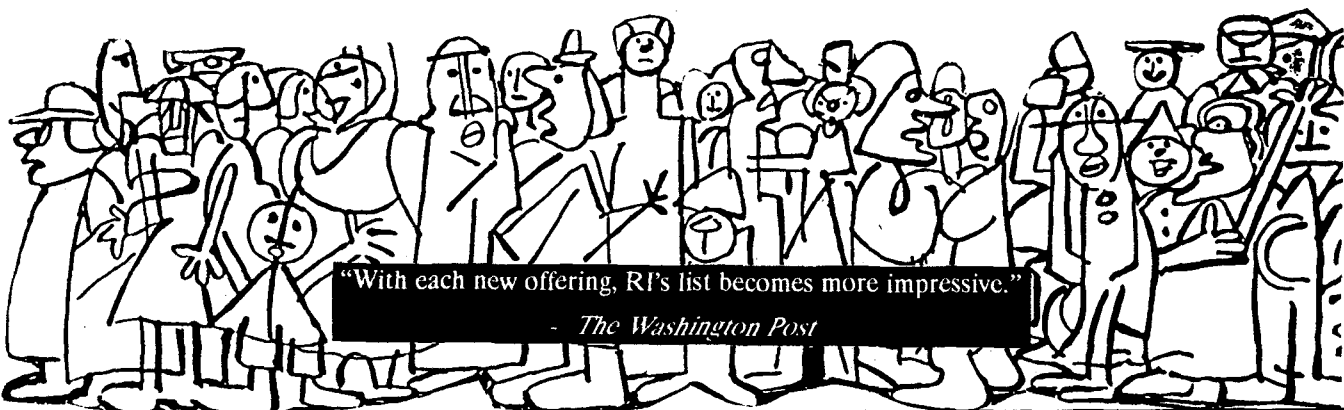
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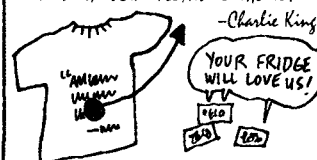
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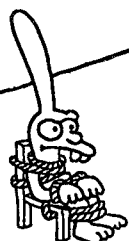
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LIFE IN HELL

LIFE IN HELL

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HOW CAN WE CONSIDER LETTING YOU OUT WHEN YOU HAVEN'T REALIZED HOW MUCH YOU DESERVE BEING IN THERE?



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Standardized pests

By Larry Doyle

Education Secretary Lauro F. Cavazos calls American students "merely average."

—New York Times, May 4

A survey of a large number of junior high or high school students finds that the average teenager is incapable of comprehending, recalling or identifying something everybody knows, for chrissakes.

—Any number of recent wire service stories

Kids These Days: A Short Study

The children seem so bright at 10 a.m. Perhaps it's the yang of each fresh day glancing off the yellow walls and wax-whitened floors, or their balanced breakfasts, hyped by oats rolled in marshmallow moons, but the children shimmer and vibrate with so much golden promise every morning that I am surprised to find, again and again, what thoroughly brutal idiots they are.

I ask them questions, and they thrust up their kiddie paws almost like cartoons—three fingers and a thumb—as if they know the answers, their faces beaming with an ignorance that can only come from deep within.

It doesn't seem to matter which one I call upon.

I pose to one, Emma, who still wears glasses and dresses, that she has a quarter and that she goes into a candy store and that all the candy bars cost a nickel: how many candy bars can she buy?

Her green eyes flicker blue and then go out in a smile. So I repeat the question.

—How many candy bars can you buy with a quarter?

—None, she says.

—But they only cost a *nickel*.

—What's *wrong* with them? she asks.

And that's the problem. At this age, nearly 12 in Emma's case, she should be well past the concrete and able to abstract, and yet, if the newspapers are to be believed, the average Japanese student already would have five candy bars, four in his pockets, while poor Emma would have none.

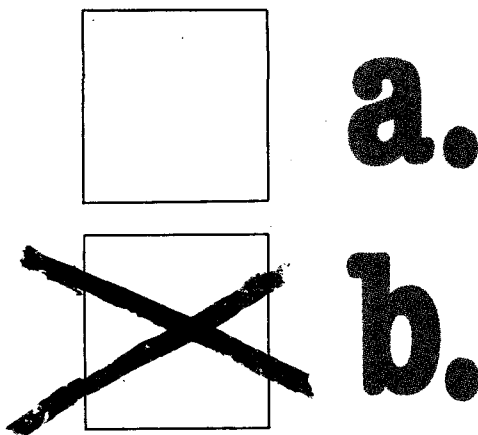
And Emma is not even the worst of them. That is probably Bryan, who ties his shoes by twirling the laces and who has not yet mastered keeping his verbs inside his sentences. Between the two lies the vast wasteland of the U.S. educational system, the national tragedy of our ill-prepared youth, the screaming headlines and screeching headaches, the *problem* with our kids these days.

Which, I guess we can all agree, is that they're stupid.

I come to this conclusion reluctantly, and only after reading numerous polls and conducting one on my own.

Subjects

My children, 22 sixth-graders from carefully broken homes, serve as a representational pool of pleasant Midwestern middle-class white folks, a group that would be expected to be, at least, average. That these children are probably above average is why I no longer buy American-made products with sharp moving parts.



Methods

In class we frequently play this game I like to call "20 Standardized Questions." It's not an exercise the children particularly enjoy, but their futures depend on it and so we play it every day.

The game is quite simple. I give the students booklets containing 20 standardized questions of my devising. For each question they are required to choose one answer among multiple alternatives offered.

The subject matter varies widely, from cultural history:

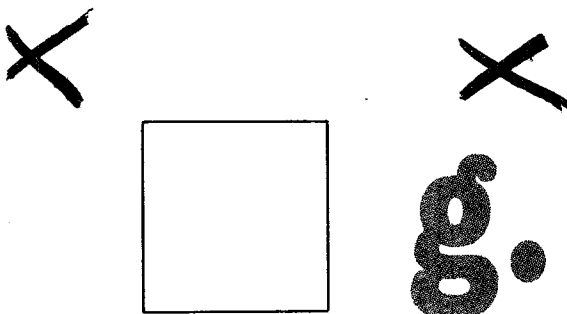
12. Jimmy Durante is to The Schnozzolla as:
- a) Soupy Sales: Cream Pies
 - b) Elvis: The Pelvis
 - c) Frank Sinatra: Ol' Blue Eyes
 - d) Mel Torme: The Velvet Fog
 - e) Abbott: Costello

To political history:

7. Adolf Hitler is to Mein Kampf as:
- a) Alexander Hamilton: The Federalist Papers
 - b) Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto
 - c) James Earl Carter: Why Not the Best?
 - d) Plato: The Republic
 - e) Frank Herbert: The Dune Trilogy
- (Correct answers: e, b)

For each correct response, the children are awarded a point; for each incorrect response, they do not receive a point. Their total scores are calculated as the total number of points awarded divided by the total number of questions, in this case 20, multiplied by 100. Letter grades, from A to F excluding E, are ascribed to each score in descending deciles.

Although we have played this game numerous times, I include only an analysis of the most recent tests, as the results are as striking and fresh in my mind as the present tense.



Results

I weep as I tabulate the red wax strokes covering the children's papers like a disease. I weep not for the children, because ours is a growing service economy, but for myself and my school district and for the declining SAT scores we can soon expect.

The results are—and there is no other word for it—alarming.

Comments

The next morning it is both raining and snowing, and the children look even younger and dumber when wet. I splash around the room, muddling from desk to desk returning the dread C-or-below, and as I wade to the front, I turn on them and say:

—What is the matter with you kids? It's *stickball* with a *stick*, and *curbball* with a *curb*. Hope and Crosby never made *Road to Cambodia*. Frankie Avalon was *never* a Mouseketeer. Where have you *been*?

They look at me with wet straw heads stuffed with nothing but snot.

—I can't believe you kids. Half of you don't know the words to the "Oscar Mayer Weiner" song. Two-thirds of you can't locate Haight-Ashbury, the Bay of Pigs or the Gulf of Tonkin, not Tonka, on the map. Three-quarters can't differentiate Dick York from Dick Sergeant. And I've got some news for you: Howdy Doody was not a Muppet.

A yellow fog settles over a sea of faces adrift.

—I'll bet most of you don't even know where your parents were when John F. Kennedy was shot. Or what a spacefood stick is. I mean, for godsakes, do any of you even know who the *Beatles* were?

They laugh at that. Of course they know who the Beatles are.

Perched butt against my desk and arms crossed, I say:

—Okay. Name them. Name the Beatles.

Fewer than half a room of hands, not so much waving as floating.

—Barry.

Barry, already sniffing in his salt-soaked sneakers, stands, but he is small and fails to rise above sea level.

—Ringo Starr, he says. Ringo Starr, right?

—Yes.

—Georgy Wilbury.

—Harrison.

—Uh huh. And Paul McCarthy, McCartney. And, and, and, the one who was shot.

—Who was?

Barry, suddenly tableau erasa, does not seem to have the name on the tip of his tongue or any other extremity.

—Does *anybody* know?

A single small hand barely supported.

—Melissa. Yes.

—John Lemon? she says.

I don't know what to say.

And so I say this:

—Listen up. I want you all to go home tonight, and I want you to talk to your parents. I want you to ask them about John Lennon, and about Brian Epstein *and* about Pete Best. I want you to have them play "A Day in the Life," and I want you to listen to it, really listen to it.

And I just hope to God, honest to God, you all come back here tomorrow ready to learn something.

Conclusion

I don't know if they will. I don't know if there is much hope for them. But I have to say, as an educator I'm quite concerned. [Larry Doyle formerly wrote any number of wire service stories. He now writes *Pogo*.